

# BBC

# Autumnwatch



**September 2006 | full report**

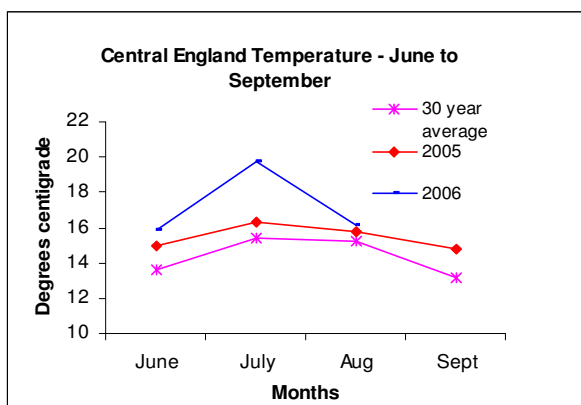
# BBC Autumnwatch 2006 | full report

## Provisional results of the Autumnwatch 2006 survey

**27 September 2006** | These results must be seen as very provisional, simply indications of possible 2006 autumn phenology, given it is too early to be any less equivocal. Some events may be largely complete (i.e. blackberry), while others (i.e. oak leaf first tint) have hardly started. The focus of this report will therefore be on larger trends and issues. Species record information to date is also presented.

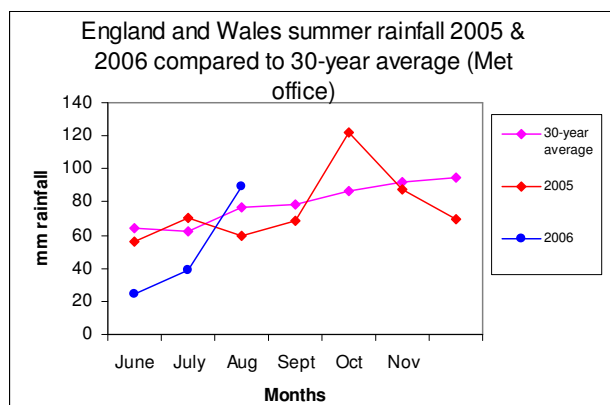
**Figure 1**

Summer 2006 Central England Temperature (CET)



**Figure 2**

Summer 2006 rainfall (England & Wales averages)



## Autumnwatch weather

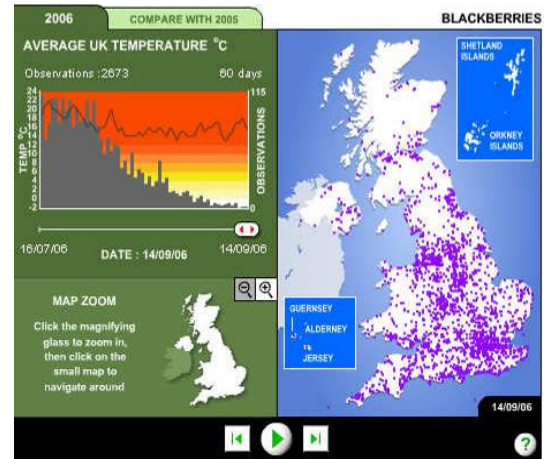
After a fairly average spring summer 2006 has been warm. Figure 1 shows just how warm July was, with temperatures 4°C above average. This corresponded with below average rainfall for June and July, leading to drought. Many trees showed signs of stress at this time, and we also had reports of chicks dying in nests under corrugated iron roofs. Wildlife was clearly struggling with the hot dry July. Much needed rain came in August and this helped fruits to swell and ripen. It's been a bumper fruiting year by all accounts as flowers were left untouched by late frosts. This was partially to do with the fact that the more 'normal' spring (see Springwatch 2006 report) meant later flowering, thus escaping frost damage was more likely.

# Blackberry

To date over 2,000 people have recorded blackberry fruit ripe.

The average date across the UK is the 1<sup>st</sup> August (so far), which is earlier than in recent years. It is also 3 days earlier than the Autumnwatch 2005 average.

This is likely to be due to the timing of analysis and the fact that other later records are still due in, which will result in the final average date being later.



However the bar chart for blackberries appears to show the peak of sightings is well and truly over so it could also be due to the very warm summer speeding up fruit ripening.

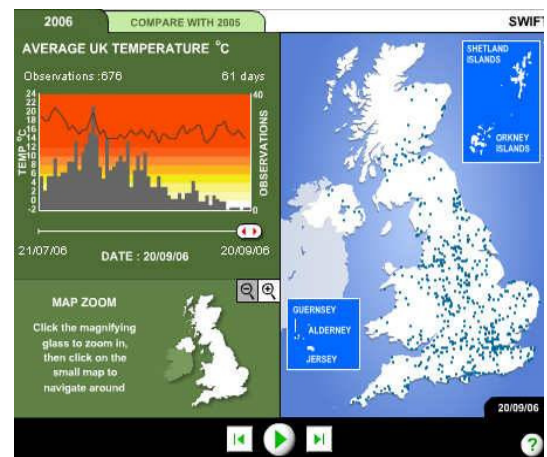
Autumnwatch results showed blackberries were riper in England about 2 weeks than they were in Scotland, just like last year (average dates 1<sup>st</sup> August and 15<sup>th</sup> August respectively). This is due to the difference in average temperature north to south and the timing of flowering also being later.

# Swift departure

To date only 670 records of Swift last seen have been made, perhaps illustrating the date you last see something is not easy to record.

The Swift bar chart suggests records are now well and truly over and swifts have gone.

Postcard records are still coming in however.



The UK Autumnwatch average for this is (so far) 11<sup>th</sup> August, which is earlier than recent years, but 2 days later than the Autumnwatch 2005 average. Again, this may be due to the timing of analysis and the fact that other records are still due in, but even then it is unlikely the date will change much now. The England average for swift last seen so far is 10<sup>th</sup> August, while the Scotland average is 13<sup>th</sup> August.

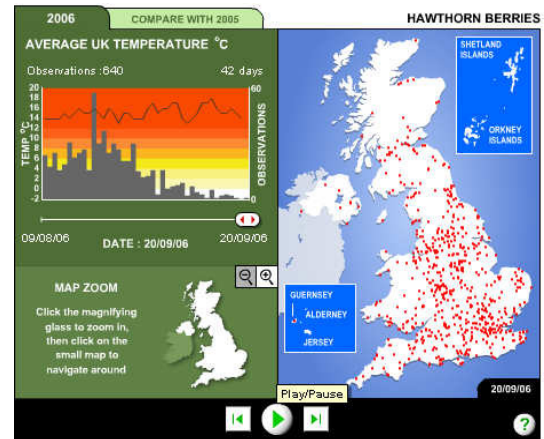
Swift migration is an interesting one. They tend to leave earlier in warmer years, as being single brooders once the young are fledged they depart soon after. In warmer years, when there is plenty of food, fledging is quicker than in cooler years. In cool periods when the adults have to travel some distance to find food, the fledglings can actually enter a state of torpor and development slows down.

This would be consistent in terms of Scotland's swifts departing slightly later, with fledging time taking slightly longer in more northern latitudes. 2006 has certainly been a good year from swiftlets developing quickly and therefore migration taking place earlier. The results seem to reflect this.

# Hawthorn ripe berries

To date only 640 records have been received of ripe hawthorn berries. The Autumnwatch UK average for hawthorn ripe berries is currently 23<sup>rd</sup> August, the same date as in Autumnwatch 2005; both are earlier than recent years.

Earlier flowering in milder springs, followed by good ripening conditions over the summer, might explain earlier hawthorn ripening, although UKPN dates for 2005 were 3<sup>rd</sup> September, so it is possible that inaccurate Autumnwatch ID is an issue. Also there are some concerns that records may contain, red, but hard berries i.e. not fully ripe (they redden well before they soften). As with blackberries we intuitively expect that hawthorn berries will ripen earlier in warm years following earlier flowering and pollination in the spring.

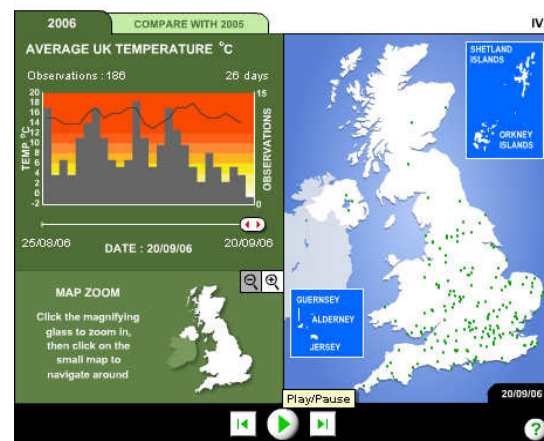


# Ivy flowers

So far only about 180 records, as we have only just begun to receive records of ivy flowering.

It is unclear at this stage whether ivy flowering phenology is changing over the longer term with climate.

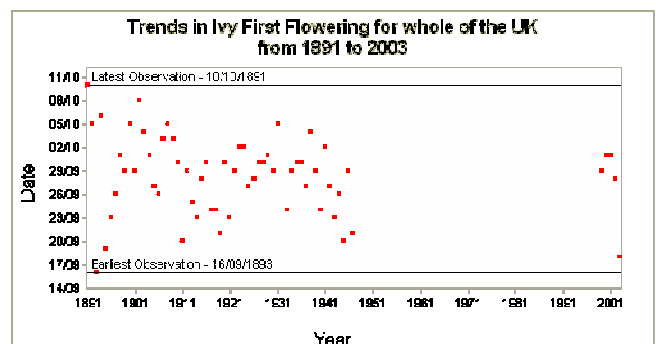
The current average is 8<sup>th</sup> September, this will change. Last year the Autumnwatch average date was 21<sup>st</sup> September. UKPN average recently range from 23<sup>rd</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>.



Ivy plays an important role in terms of later summer pollen and nectar as well as very late berries, for winter birds.

It is much maligned by those who might wish to 'tidy' up the urban and rural landscape, but does play a wide range of important roles for wildlife, including; roosting sites for bats, nesting and roosting for birds, diapause sites for insects, food source for a wide range of wildlife.

The UK Phenology Network – seeking to collate and store all UK data on Nature's Calendar. For notes relating to this graph click [here](#) or to close this window and make changes to your select to create another graph, click [here](#). To reset this graph back to its original state click [here](#).



Contrary to belief it is not a parasite of trees, taking no nutrients directly from them. It is shallow rooted and for that reason doesn't tend to compete with its host for water, except perhaps with shallow rooted trees in drought conditions. Support is the only thing it needs from a tree, and this causes no problems to healthy trees. The only circumstances where it is worth considering ivy control in terms of wildlife, is where an ancient tree, with a weak crown, is heavily clad with ivy and there is a risk that the increased 'sail area' of the ivy could destabilise branches.

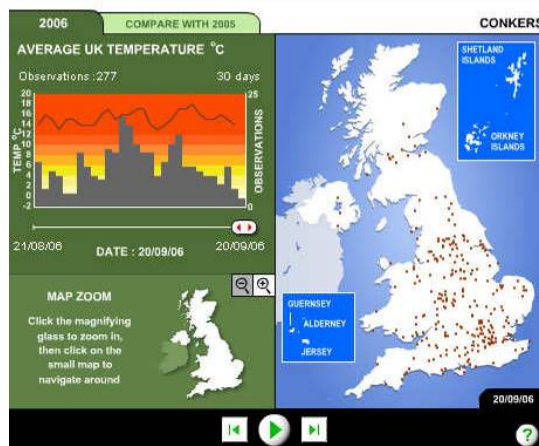


# Conkers

So far we have only about 270 records of conkers.

The graph above shows that we are still very much within the recording period, current average date 8<sup>th</sup> Sept, this will undoubtedly change.

As with other fruit ripening we would expect to see conkers earlier in warmer years.



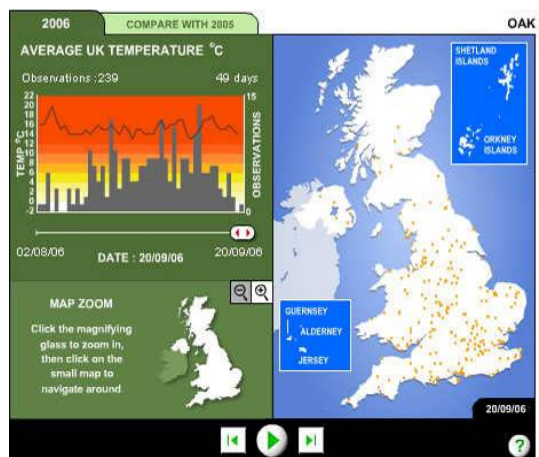
The Autumnwatch 2005 final average UK date was 17<sup>th</sup> September. Recent years have seen the UKPN average date for conkers ripening around 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> September.

# Oak first tint

So just over 230 records in, as this event has hardly started.

The average date for Autumnwatch 2005 was 30<sup>th</sup> September, the current average this year is only the 2<sup>nd</sup> September (this will change).

Current understanding of leaf tinting suggests that in warmer non-drought years, leaf tinting starts later and leaves stay on the trees longer- i.e. leaf tinting is later and lasts longer.



However in drought years rainfall can be a major factor in early leaf tinting. Given the drought during June & July, we may see slightly earlier average dates for this event, when all records are in.

In non-drought years start of leaf tint is caused by the cessation of chlorophyll (which makes the leaf appear green) production in the leaf and therefore other pigments in the leaf (otherwise masked by the chlorophyll) begin to appear.

The most common of these is carotene, which is yellow/orange in colour. This pigment is in leaves all the time, but only revealed at the end of the year when chlorophyll breaks down.

In drought years, stressed deciduous trees adopt the strategy of losing their leaves as it is through their leaves that they lose water.

Drought leaf tint is more like leaf desiccation, with leaves turning brown and dry.

# Tables of results

**Table 1**

Average UKPN dates from 2000-2004 for the six Autumnwatch events

	<b>2000 average</b>	<b>2001 average</b>	<b>2002 average</b>	<b>2003 average</b>	<b>2004 average</b>	<b>2005 average</b>
<b>Bramble</b> fruit ripe	30/08/2000	27/08/2001	25/08/2002	14/08/2003	14/08/2004	06/08/2005
<b>Hawthorn</b> fruit ripe	16/09/2000	20/09/2001	12/09/2002	07/09/2003	07/09/2004	24/08/2005
<b>Oak</b> first tint	08/10/2000	06/10/2001	03/10/2002	29/09/2003	03/10/2004	02/10/2005
<b>Swift</b> last recorded	26/08/2000	26/08/2001	20/08/2002	20/08/2003	18/08/2004	17/08/2005
<b>Horse chestnut</b> fruit ripe	27/09/2000	26/09/2001	23/09/2002	19/09/2003	19/09/2004	17/09/2005
<b>Ivy</b> flowering	29/09/2000	30/09/2001	27/09/2002	24/09/2003	23/09/2004	22/09/2005

**Table 2**

Autumnwatch 2006 average dates (so far)

	<b>UK</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>Northern Ireland</b>
<b>Bramble</b> fruit ripe	<b>01/08/2006</b>	01/08/2006	15/08/2006	01/08/2006	13/08/2006
<b>Hawthorn</b> fruit ripe	<b>22/08/2006</b>	22/08/2006	26/08/2006	22/08/2006	23/08/2006
<b>Oak</b> first tint	<b>28/08/2006</b>	28/08/2006	31/08/2006	28/08/2006	26/08/2006
<b>Swift</b> last recorded	<b>11/08/2006</b>	10/08/2006	13/08/2006	12/08/2006	17/08/2006
<b>Conker</b> fruit ripe	<b>04/09/2006</b>	04/09/2006	07/09/2006	03/09/2006	11/09/2006
<b>Ivy</b> flowering	<b>05/09/2006</b>	05/09/2006	03/09/2006	07/09/2006	08/09/2006