

A walk by the Almond in September

It was a beautiful day in mid September and the walkway was busy. It was wonderful to hear children chattering, the sound of the river and the roar from Fair a' Far weir. There was also the sound of beech nuts falling to the ground. Leaves were beginning to yellow and fall from the trees. Fruits were readily visible on ash, alder, sycamore and lime. Autumn was on its way!



Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*)



Large - leaved Lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*)



Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*)

There were berries on elder, bramble and hawthorn. All provide an excellent food source for many bird species. Personally I rather like collecting elderberries to make a jelly which has a most unusual and delicious flavour.



Elderberries at Dowie's Mill



Hawthorn by School Brae car park

Ivy flowers are the main autumn source of pollen and nectar for flower-visiting insects and usually the most abundant are honey bees, social wasps, hover flies and flies. On ivy near the Falls Café there was a wide variety of insects visiting the flowers. A study recently carried out at Sussex University has shown that in September and October 89% of the pollen pellets brought by worker bees to hives were from ivy whilst 80% of honey bees were collecting nectar rather than pollen.



Ivy flowers with foraging hover fly

It was now the time for fungi and several species were noted including a clump of honey fungus near Dowie's Mill Cottages. It was very sticky and clearly something had been munching it! Lawyer's Wig was growing in a damp area near Cramond and was undergoing autodigestion. Both these fungi are edible but I would not advise eating them without expert advice.



Honey fungus (*Armillaria mellea*)



Lawyer's Wig (*Coprinus comatus*)

Walking by the riverside over the last 9 months it has been wonderful to watch how the intricate web of nature unfolds throughout the seasons. We must strive to maintain and encourage its diversity!

Isla Browning