



MAY

In wet meadows and beside water the magnificent marsh marigold or king cup flowers in grand clumps.

In wood walks and hedgerow edges the red campion comes into flower. New roadsides often sing with the massed flowers of ox-eye daisy. In gardens, hedges and woods the distinctive herb robert is in flower, and along woodland walks so is herb bennet. Wild mignonette flowers with a preference for chalk. A flower of cornfield edges and roadsides is the scented mayweed.



Marsh marigold



Cow parsley

The most visible flowers of May are the continuous lacy heads of cow parsley on the wayside, with above filling the hedgerow the amazingly abundant white flowers of May or hawthorn. Hedges are dotted with elder also in flower, whilst the noble horse chestnut is covered with candelabras of flowers. More discrete in the shade are the remarkable green flowers of the arum (cuckoo pint). In damp hedges and woods the unmistakable creamy white flower-heads of guelder rose open. Ivy-leaved toadflax is flowering on walls, kidney vetch on heaths with clumps of wild thyme. Sea campion, flowers on the coast and white campion elsewhere. Grassland is full of flowering red and white clover and medick. Wayside crab apple trees come into pinky-white flowers, and that rare but useful indicator species, the wild service tree, seen at the edges of some ancient woodland also opens into white flowers. Birdsong is joined with the resonant sounds of more migrant warblers, like the sedge and reed warblers near water.

The striking poplar hawkmoths and white ermine moths can be found resting during the day. The scarlet and black cinnabar moth can be seen flying in daytime, (its stripy caterpillars feed on ragwort). The strikingly cruciform white plume moth will be seen on grass in the day. The glorious banded demoiselle damselfly, and the less showy blue-tailed damselfly, can be found flickering over our streams and rivers from May through high summer. Red-tailed bumble bees normally emerge from hibernation in May. Mayflies do live up to their name and emerge from our streams from May onwards. Alder flies with heavy dark lacy wings appear. Scorpion flies begin to be seen in hedges, unusual looking insect, 'part moose-head, and definite scorpion tail'!