



‘What’s About’

No 26

Spring and early Summer 2011

In the bright sunshine at 6.30 this morning, the 22nd June, I walked across Church Field. It was alive with the song and call of adult birds,... and the tweets and squawks of recently fledged finches. I noted a party of 16 **Goldfinches** and two groups of 4 **Linnets**. 4 **Greenfinches** rose to sit on the wires of Mill Rd, and towards the car park a flock of about 30 **Starlings** took off. There were a couple of **Song Thrushes**, a **Dunnock** or two, a pair of **Collared Doves** that cooed beyond the football pitch, and high above a **Skylark** sang out. I think that in our own ways we were all thankful for the plentiful supply of grass and the wildflower seed heads, unknown and wonderful.

By contrast the river is a pretty quiet place at the moment. Yes, there are some noisy gulls: **Black-headed**, **Herring** and **Lesser Black-backed**, and **Oystercatchers** can stand around making an awful din, but the tideline holds few waders in the summer months. A small number of **Redshank** and **Curlew** are always on the saltings, and in late June **Shelduck** and their young should join them. Although a pair of Shelduck was seen guiding 6 ducklings across Woodbridge Road on the 8th June and another pair of Shelduck with ducklings was in the sugarbeet at the top of Cross farm drive on the 10th June, I have not yet seen the crèches of young Shelduck that appear at this time of year on the river. Adult and juvenile **Herons** can be seen feeding in some of the gullies, but **Little Egrets** do not seem to be as plentiful as in the last few years – the hard winter took a toll. 6 – 8 **Common Terns** feed frequently in the shallow water along the inside of the moorings. A **Whimbrel** was heard on the 8th May. **Buzzards** and **Marsh Harriers** are often seen overhead or distantly towards The Rocks.

Early migrants in April were a **Swallow** at Rudd’s Barn and Howe’s Farm on the 4th, a **Whitethroat** at Manor House track and another at Howe’s Farm on the 7th. A **Nightingale** was heard at Manor House on the 7th and by the 21st, 3 or 4 **Wheatears** had been seen on Church Field. The first **Cuckoo** to be heard was towards the river below Rudd’s Barn on the 22nd. A **Blackcap** was singing at Low Farm on the 28th. On the 9th May a **Swift** was seen over Sunnyhill and a **Turtle Dove** was heard near Hemley Hall on the 13th May.

The **Wheatears** would have been passage birds on their way north to breeding territories and it is likely that both the **Swallow** and **Swift** were on their way northwards too. Happily, a **Cuckoo** could be heard calling intermittently along the riverside fields, the golf course, the reservoir and towards Rudd's Barn and Howe's Farm throughout May. The last call to be heard on the 15th June was from near the reservoir. A **Turtle Dove** was heard and seen at Glebe Farm on the 17th May and the 15th June and another was 'purring' near the golf course on the 14th June and River's Hall wood on the 23rd June. **Whitethroats** seem to have had a good year, and with more adults returning there was more 'scratchy' song from the hedgerows, so that by mid-June a good number of fledgling birds were about. A family party of 5 Whitethroats was watched working its way along the hedge of Manor House track on the 23rd June. There have been several singing **Nightingales**: 3 in the Manor House area, and also at the reservoir, Church Farm, Whitehall, Mill Road, Novocastria and the golf course. **Chiffchaffs** and **Blackcaps** have been singing in larger gardens and wild areas, but the **Willow Warbler** has not been heard again this year around the village. But **Cetti's Warbler** calls deafeningly at the reservoir.

House Martins do not seem to have returned in their usual numbers and several nest sites that have been used in recent years remain unattended. **Swallows** may have fared a little better, at least there are a few Swallows that swoop and dive about the houses in the village, but three people who have been used to having good numbers of Swallows in their localities have reported the sad decline in their numbers. **Swifts** need rather special nest sites that are enclosed within the eaves of houses. In older buildings where there are gaps under tiles or between the eaves and gutters Swifts, pairing for life, have nested and returned annually to these colonies. Fortunate are the owners of these favoured houses! Today the red tape of modern building regulations demands sealed roof spaces so, with fewer nest sites, it seem likely that fewer Swifts have been able to breed. And this may be a major reason for the 50% decline in their number in the last 10 years. Specially designed nest boxes have provided successful nest sites and some new buildings have had nestbox chambers built into the brickwork. In Waldringfield no more than 2 or 3 Swifts fly low around the quay and a similar number are seen overhead near the village hall, but *where do Swifts nest in the village? And how many House Martin and Swallow nests have there been in the village this year? Your observations and sightings will be welcome.*

Unless bird feeders have been filled, **Goldfinches** have been less evident in gardens than during the winter months, but **Chaffinches** remain close to habitation as do the limited number of **Greenfinches** that have survived disease and the hard winter. **Yellowhammers** have been seen more frequently this year. A favoured haunt has been the golf course but this year singing birds have been seen and heard throughout the spring and early summer along Manor House track, Mill Road, and the river bank gorse. Towards the northern end of the gorse at least 2 pairs of **Linnets** have nested and now flocks of **Starlings** feed on the meadow.

A **Coal Tit** was on a peanut feeder in Christine's garden on 10th April, and it's good to know that a pair bred successfully in the village: Sally reported a family party of 5 Coal Tits feeding on fat balls in her garden on the 27th May. Christine reported a **Goldcrest** in her garden on the 9th April but at that time she also saw **Magpies** and a **Kestrel** in the neighbourhood, and a **Sparrowhawk** on the 16th May. Sally reported a Sparrowhawk in her garden on the 9th May.

A **Great-spotted Woodpecker** was seen regularly in Mill Road during April and a **Green Woodpecker** was in the oaks along the northern boundary of the golf course on the 20th May, but the Great-spotted Woodpecker does seem to be absent from its former haunts and this year the 'yaffle' of the Green Woodpecker has not been heard along the cricket field valley.

During April the **Barn Owls** remained elusive but on 7th May one was seen in the late evening quartering the grazing marsh and towards the end of the month single birds have been seen more regularly on the grazing marsh and on the 14th June behind the sailing club.

A **Little Owl** was near the Rectory on 24th May and one perched on the ridge of Mill Cottage on several evenings in mid June. Another Little Owl was on the lane to the north of the golf course on the 9th June.

2 **Tufted Duck** and a pair of **Greylags** with 4 goslings were on the reservoir on the 7th June.

A **Spotted Flycatcher** was feeding on the Playing Field on morning of the 22nd June.

In the fine weather at the start of April butterflies took to the wing. A **Peacock** was seen on the 2nd April, **Speckled Wood**, **Brimstone** (fem) and a white on the 6th April, **Holly Blue** and **Orange-tip** on the 7th April, **Comma** on the 9th April, and **Red Admiral** on the 22nd April. By the end of April Jill and Michael Atkins at Rudd's Barn had seen all the usual butterflies as well as **Small Tortoiseshell** and **Small Copper**. **Large Skipper** and **Meadow Brown** were seen on the 1st June and a **Ringlet** on the 15th June.

An **Emperor Moth** was seen laying eggs on the wall of the Sailing Club on the 23rd April. The scrub habitat that is alongside the building and towards the reservoir is ideal for this species, but its choice of location for egg-laying does not seem to be very wise!



Emperor Moth and eggs
Photo Alexis Smith

A dead **Hedgehog** was reported on the five bends on the 17th April. Hedgehog droppings were noted on Church Field on the 10th April, but on the 17th April Pam Crawley reported that so far this year there had been no evidence of hedgehogs in her garden, and in June Christine reported no evidence in her garden in Waldringfield Heath.

However, Christine did report that she had seen a **Muntjac** eating the hedge opposite her house on the 13th April. Another was seen on the 2nd June on the outer edge of the saltings, at the top end of the moorings. Was it just grazing the new growth on the saltings or had it got designs on swimming to The Tips? A Muntjac was seen during the evening of the 10th May on the bridleway to the side of Alexis' house.

Whilst the corn remained short several **Hares** were seen: in the fields behind Mill Road on the 12th April, and from Cross Farm towards the Thatched Cottage on various dates.

On the evening of the 20th April Sally first saw a **bat** flying around her house and on the 30th April a bat was seen in Fishpond Road. By early June a bat had become a fairly regular evening visitor to our garden and conservatory.

Two **Fox** cubs were seen near the Moon and Sixpence on the 1st May. A dead young Fox was on the road between Plum Tree Cottage and Newbourne on the 6th May.

2 dead young **Squirrels** were found by Sally in her garden, near to where a **Stoat** was seen, on the 28th April. Another stoat was seen on the golf course bank on Woodbridge Road on the 10th May.

Whilst completing the village hedgerow survey Christine saw a **Roe Deer** and Grey **Partridge** near Whitehall.

Frog tadpoles had hatched in our pond by the 7th April and at about that time Pam reported spawn in her garden pond. At the end of the month Christine reported that there was no spawn in her pond, but there was a number of healthy looking frogs about the garden.

On St Mark's Day, 25th April, Christine noted that there were plenty of the slow flying, black **St Mark's Flies** about.

On the 29th May a female **Stag Beetle** road casualty was found on Woodbridge Road at the corner of Low Farm field and the golf course. The night of the 14th-15th June was warmer than usual and on the morning of the 15th, 3 male and 2 female Stag Beetles were found as road casualties on School Road hill. On the 20th June 1 male and 3 females were found dead on Woodbridge Road just beyond the last house of the village.

A bumblebee nest had been dug out overnight by a **Badger** near the Corner House in Deben Lane on 19th June and a wasp nest had been dug out of an old rabbit hole along Woodbridge Road on the 22nd June.

A **Bee Orchid** started to flower on the bank at Howe's Farm entrance on the 1st June.



Small Tortoiseshell

For this edition I am grateful to the following contributors: Jill and Michael Atkins, Ros Burfield, Joe and Kit Clark, Pam Crawley, Janet Elliot, Christine Fisher Kay, Serena Gold, Joe and Ruth Lubbock, David and Angela Mace, Janette Mace, Anne Maddison, Max and Margaret Pemberton, Sally Redfern, Sally Rigby, Pat Shipley, Alexis and John Smith, David and Judith Stinson, Neil Winship

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