



‘What’s About’

No 27

Late Summer 2011

The first of the winter’s **Brent Geese** were seen flying south off Felixstowe on the 10th Sept., so with migration well underway it’s time I wrote another What’s About!

In late July there was an increase in the number of migrant lapwing flocks on the river and the adjacent fields, and it was not many days after that the first **Greenshank** and **Whimbrel** were heard. Seen in their summer breeding plumage on Scottish moorland during May this year, I enjoyed making the connection between those birds and the same species on the Deben now. But I wonder just where our Deben migrants have come from – perhaps ringed birds will give us an answer. A winter project to scan ringing results emerges! Of our summer visitors that breed here the **Cuckoo** is probably the first to depart. The last bird to be heard calling was on the 28th June and, having no interest in the parenting of its offspring, no doubt it was soon on its way to its wintering grounds in Africa. The fascinating progress of five ‘5g satellite tagged’ adult cuckoos can be followed as they made their way through Europe, traversed the Sahara, and now move on through central Africa. The website is <http://www.bto.org/science/migration/tracking-studies/cuckoo-tracking> . Back on home soil at least two cuckoos were in the area in the early summer, mostly in the fields and small copses of woodland that border the river, and cuckoos could be heard on the Sutton bank of the river too, but I don’t think the intensity of ‘cuckooing’ has been as great or as widespread as in previous years.

Whether or not **Little Egrets** moved south in the harsh weather of last winter I don’t know, certainly they were less obvious on the river at that time, but numbers have returned to normal now. 14 of these snow-white egrets stood in one of the oaks near to Howe’s Farm reservoir on the 17th Aug.

Ospreys are migrating through the area now. One was seen flying south over Landguard on the 29th Aug and another was at Bawdsey on 1st Sept. On the 5th Sept I saw an Osprey on one of the dead trees along the edge of the salting below Whitehall, and it then flew off down river. An Osprey was seen at Trimley on the 8th Sept and one was seen at Kyson Point on 11th Sept at 10.05am and again at 19.30 when it was between Kyson and Methersgate. To what extent these sightings refer to the same bird, or perhaps two or three birds, is unknown, but there is still time this season for another Osprey to be spotted.



Osprey at Waldringfield. Kestrel hovering in the distance.

Buzzards have been seen towards Methersgate and Ramsholt Rocks.

Sparrowhawks have been seen quite frequently. In early July Sally watched one for a full five minutes in the cricket field and Fishpond Road area, and then on the 31st of the month she wrote, ‘Just seen a magnificent display in our garden at 9.30 this morning. A flurry of feathers alerted me to a female Sparrowhawk diving through the garden after a pigeon. It made contact but the pigeon escaped only for another attempt when the Sparrowhawk swooped after it back towards the house. The pigeon got away by flying over the roof and the Sparrowhawk landed on the roof looking dishevelled and put out. A lucky escape for the pigeon.’

Kestrels have been less evident this year, but single birds have been seen over the village.

Red-legged Partridge. In mid July Stan wrote, ‘In the spring, we were delighted to see a pair of Red-legged Partridge regularly visiting the garden. Some of our neighbours also saw the pair. Other visitors including a marauding sparrowhawk and a cat who we christened KC, short for Killer Cat. KC used to come to the garden most mornings, hide amongst the shrubs and then pounce on the birds feeding under the bird feeder. We saw him/her catch a couple of birds and tried chasing it off, but it was always persistent. Sadly, one day we saw a pile of brown feathers and a sole partridge looking for its mate. Who was to blame? Was it KC or the sparrowhawk who we saw making two kills in the garden as recent as last week? We subsequently moved the feeder to make it less easy for KC. But isn't nature wonderful. Yesterday, Ms. R.L. Partridge came back to see us with her SEVEN chicks and I was able to get some shots with the camera. The quality is not brilliant as I am shooting via double glazing. Is the bird a single mum or a caring father? Me thinks it must be the hen. Whatever, it made our day.’ A couple of days late Stan wrote ‘Not so good news. The R L Partridge turned up today with just one chick. Hoping the rest were on an away day, but not confident. It would make Kate Humble go weepie.’



Red-legged Partridge and chicks. Photo by Stan Baston

A **Grey Plover** in fine summer plumage was on the shoreline near Swan's Nest on the 8th Aug.

I haven't seen so many **Little Terns** on the river this year, but there have been a few **Sandwich Terns** and several feeding groups of 8-10 **Common Terns**. During a walk down river of the dingy park Sally noted 4 Common Terns and a Sandwich Tern close inshore. Angela noted a fairly late Common Tern fishing off the beach on the 9th Sept.

Once again our barn owl boxes have given refuge to **Stock Doves** and several have been used as their nest sites. Stock Doves are an uncommon species so our owl boxes are doing them a good turn!

A **Turtle Dove** was heard calling near Rudd's Barn on the 27th June and on the same day an adult **Shelduck** and 8 ducklings crossed the road near Rudd's Barn and headed down hill towards the river. On the 5th July Janette watched 9 young Shelduck and parents just off Debenaire.

Barn Owls have not been seen hunting frequently this year and our nest monitoring showed only one breeding pair in the nestboxes. 2 well grown chicks were ringed by Steve Abbott in July. Sightings of adults were made over the grazing marsh, over the field behind the sailing club and near the reservoir.

A **Little Owl** was seen near Seven Acres by Christine on the 7th Aug

A small number of **Swifts** nested in the village and small groups of young and adult birds were seen and heard screaming overhead. These relatively low groups of Swifts indicate local breeding, high flying Swifts have usually travelled several miles from their nesting colonies. Observation of Swifts flying around buildings in the village would indicate a very limited number of nests perhaps in School Road and near the quay.

A **Green Woodpecker** in the Waldringfield Heath area was noted by Alexis and Christine, and Sally watched one feeding on her lawn on the 9th Aug. Good records as they do not seem to be so numerous this year.

Great Spotted Woodpecker coming into gardens have been recorded infrequently, but they have been heard and seen in various parts of the main village and in Waldringfield Heath.

There was some concern about the very low number of **Swallows** and **House Martins** that had been seen in the spring but later their numbers did build up, and on the 3rd July Judith reported that swallows were nesting in her garage after a lapse of a couple of years and that House Martins were using the artificial nest on the north wall of the house. Angela has kept a record of the maximum number of Swallows gathering at a

traditional meeting point on the wires in Deben Lane. 10th July 2, 17th July 7, 24th July 26, 31st July 11, 11th Aug 6. A late brood of Swallows – 4 young birds were still in the nest on the 12th Sept – at Debenaire. This new nest site is under the balcony. Janette has mentioned that in the last half of August a favoured feeding area has been over the river just off the quay, where 50+ Swallows and martins have been seen perched on the jetty and the Jahan. Janette noted that once again the oystercatchers nested on the roof and two chicks both fell off fatally. This has happened for about five years in a row, with no success. Also Janette confirmed that the feral bees in the Debenaire roof space are no longer evident this summer, after at least five years.

Pied Wagtails, 6 to 8 of them, have frequented the beach and through the summer months have been seen perched often on the dinghies, moored boats and beach huts.

Robins become quite secretive in the summer months whilst they moult. They stay within cover and won't be singing until late August or September, but as yet I have heard no more than the soft trilling that has been given from a perch deep within a honeysuckle. A **Blackcap** was still in full song in the garden here on the 8th July, and as I heard it singing 8 Swifts screamed overhead.

Cetti's Warbler has been calling again by the reservoir with brief loud calls heard on the 7th Sept and again on the 10th Sept.

Pam has noted a **Chiffchaff** that has recently been hunting through a honeysuckle in her garden. They can still be heard calling occasionally.

On the 26th June a **Spotted Flycatcher** was seen perched on the chainlink fence of the playing field and using this as a return perch after its insect catching flights. Seen again on the 1st July and then on the 4th when carrying food in its beak away from the playing field. This was a good indication that it had a nest in the area. Max wrote, 'The best news I have is of flycatchers - my favourite. They were late arriving this year the 20th May and we had sightings again on the 21st, 24th & 26th. Then no more and we thought they must have moved on. Today [13th July] we saw one both in the back garden and then in the front - delightful. So they must be nesting nearby'.

A family of **Coal Tits** visited Judith's garden in early July and at about the same time a family of Coal Tits were seen with **Great** and **Blue Tits** moving as a feeding party through gardens in Sunnyhill.

A **Treecreeper** was watched by Pam in her garden on the 27th July and again in August, when the insects under the loose bark on a gum tree were a favoured food.

Christine has mentioned the good number of **House Sparrows** that live in the area of her house, and has remarked on the colonies that she has noticed around the village at the corner of Cliff Road and Sandy Lane, at Village Way and Deben Lane. On the 31st July Christine spotted a bird in her garden that was identified as a **Siskin**, an interesting record of a less common visitor at this time of year.

On the 27th June a number of **Linnets**, about six, were seen on the edge of the golf course along Woodbridge Road. It is here that **Yellowhammers** have been seen, a male was on the golf course hedge on the 1st July and another was singing near Rudd's Barn on the same day. Yellowhammers have also been seen along Mill Road and on Manor House track. They've been a garden visitor too, a pair stopping in Judith's garden in early June. A flock of 30+ **Linnets** rose from the gorse on the river bank near to Manor House in the early morning of the 14th Aug. Last winter and in previous years this has been a winter roost site and it is interesting to watch 60+ birds entering and leaving the gorse in small, darting groups in the early morning and evening.

Betsy reported a colony of **Tree Bumblebees** *Bombus hypnorum* in a bird box within the school grounds. They can be identified by their rich ginger/brown thorax, black abdomen and white tail. This is an interesting species that was first identified in Britain in Wiltshire in 2001 and in the last ten years has spread throughout the south east and the midlands and into northern England and also southern Wales.

Stephen Clover sent me photographs of a pair of **Poplar Hawkmoths** which Charlie discovered coupled on a holly tree on the 21st July. 'The moths disappeared after dark on that day, presumably for the female to search for suitable trees on which to lay her eggs....we very much enjoyed their (all too short) tenure of our back garden'.



A pair of Poplar Hawkmoths. Photo by Stephen and Charlie Clover

The Wildlife Group Picnic was held near the reservoir on 3rd Aug at which our guests David and Anne Healey identified the following dragonflies: Emperor, Brown Hawker male and female ovipositing, Ruddy Darter and a probable Southern Hawker; and the following damselflies: Azure, Common, Blue, Blue-tailed and Tenoral.

7-Spot Ladybirds have been quite plentiful with a good emergence around the 24th August when numerous 7-Spots were seen on the fencing and gate post at Turner's Yard in Fishpond Lane.

2 adult **Seals** and 2 pups have been seen around Early Creek and John Smith has remarked about their inquisitiveness when sailors are nearby.

A **Weasel** was seen crossing Newbourne Road by the golf club on 13th July.

Muntjacs have been less evident in the summer months, no doubt they have enjoyed the cover of thick vegetation, but one was seen crossing Woodbridge Rd near Hill Farm on the 26th July and another was by the pond in Fishpond Rd on the 29th July.

A larger deer, a **Roe Deer**, was seen near to Christine's house on the 7th Aug.

There has been plenty of **Badger** activity around the village: disturbed roadside edges, dug out wasp and bumblebee nests and, towards Howe's Farm, an eaten out hedgehog with only skin and spines remaining.



Common Blue on Church Field by Christine



Southern Hawker in Alexis' garden

For this edition I am grateful to the following contributors: Jill and Michael Atkins, Stan Baston, Ros Burfield, Joe and Kit Clark, Stephen and Charlie Clover, Pam Crawley, Janet Elliot, Christine Fisher Kay, Joe and Ruth Lubbock, David and Angela Mace, Janette Mace, Anne Maddison, Max and Margaret Pemberton, Sally Redfern, Betsy and Colin Reid, Alexis and John Smith, Judith Stinson,

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