



‘What’s About’

**No 31
Late April and May 2012**

One of the Group’s spring projects has been to increase the number of nest sites for Spotted Flycatchers and, under Christine’s guidance, 40 nestboxes have been distributed within the village. Fewer Spotted Flycatchers have been seen in Suffolk in recent years, but a pair or two have been known to nest in our locality and very soon after the nestboxes had been placed, two Spotted Flycatchers arrived in Mary Tucker’s garden on the 24th May. Now perhaps they will be spoilt for choice when nest site selection has to be made!

Wildfowl that have remained on the river have for the most part hidden themselves away whilst nesting takes place. There are very few Shelduck - mostly single birds out on the mud, and a number of non-breeding Curlews, and displaying, piping Oystercatchers. Brilliantly white Little Egrets cannot be confused, even at a distance, with the gulls that sit out on the saltings. Ever-watchful Crows, eager for the chance of an easy meal, take up vantage points on the stakes that stand up out of the river’s edge. 2 Whimbrels were seen and heard calling on the 22nd April and a couple of Common Sandpipers have been seen along the tideline during both April and May. A small flock of Dunlin is about and a few Grey Plovers remain.

It is not too surprising that the Barn Owls have been seen infrequently, no doubt their nocturnal hunting is adequate for their needs and it’s too early for there to be any demanding young birds that require extra daytime hunting flights. A Short-eared Owl was seen on the grazing marsh on the 22nd April and again on the 12th and 16th May. A Short-eared Owl has wintered along the Deben, particularly down river of here around Ramsholt, Kirton and Falkenham. A Little Owl was seen in the wood by the school on the 22nd May and they are to be seen along the oaks that border the golf course on Ipswich Road and the track west from Cross Farm junction.

A Marsh Harrier was watched stall-diving onto a small rodent which it carried off in its talons from a field near White Hall on the 26th April and three were seen over the Hemley saltings on the 1st May. They are seen regularly downriver of the village. There was a possible sighting of a Hen Harrier in the Hemley area on the 27th April. Three Buzzards were seen near to Hemley Hall and a Kestrel over a field near Plum Tree Cottage on the 1st May. A Buzzard was over the golf course on the 12 May. A Sparrowhawk flew through Sally’s garden on the 2nd May, scattering feeding birds,

but having no hunting success. Unlike a Sparrowhawk that downed a Collared Dove in Fishpond Road but being disturbed, immediately dropped its prey and departed.

Christine heard the first Cuckoo in the fields behind the Old Rectory on the 24th April, but Jackie Brinsley had heard one a day or two earlier in the Newbourne area. (I don't intend this to read as if there was a competition!) A Cuckoo was calling on the other side of the river on the 30th April and then later that morning near Rudd's Barn. Since then a Cuckoo has been calling quite regularly during the early morning and towards the end of May daytime calling has become frequent.

Three House Martins were above the houses in Fishpond Road and three Swallows were at Howe's Farm, both on the 30th April, and at about that time Swallows began to take up residence at several locations around the village. By the 9th May Swifts were flying over the village. Records of where they nest this year will be very welcome.

We've had good numbers of Nightingales again this year with 2 singing males at the Manor Cottage thicket, - one below the cottage and the other near to Jim Turner's seat. Another sings close to the path at the reservoir. One has been heard regularly at the small wood at Holly Corner and another in the thicket at Kirton Creek, near where the farm track meets the Creek wall.

The Cetti's Warbler has been in good song at the reservoir, but there has been no further sighting of the Willow Warbler that appeared there briefly in early April. A Grasshopper Warbler was heard in the more open part of the riverside thicket at the end of the grazing marsh on the 5th and 6th May, and again on the 9th May.

Skylarks have 'pourest thy full heart' from above Church Field where on a sunny day the number of birds singing would indicate several pairs.

A flock of Linnets was seen regularly feeding on Church Field and Goldfinches have been feeding there. They are doing well in gardens too and have been seen in a small flock by the riverside houses.

Whitethroats began to call from the hedgerows at the beginning of May and their scratchy song is still to be heard and they are to be seen flitting up and down many of the hedgerows.

A small flock of Yellowhammers was along the roadside hedge near Plum Tree Cottage on the 1st May and others have been seen along Mill Road, the field hedge on the path south of the dinghy park and around the golf course.

A pair of Greylag / white farmyard geese brought 7 goslings to the reservoir on the 26th April.

A Stoat was seen near High Trees in Fishpond Road on 1st May and Agnes reports that a weasel has been seen around the garden too.

Bats were flying around Sunnyhill during the evening of the 1st May. Two Pipistrelle Bats were identified with a bat detector along the Manor Cottage track on the 27th May and another larger unidentified species was seen flying there at the same time.

A hedgehog was found as a road casualty on the hill by the Church on the 29th May. Reports of hedgehogs, dead or alive, would be very welcome.

A Muntjac came out of cover on Fishpond Road on the 18th May and another, by the Church, was watched on the 29th May. Tracks of a larger species of deer have been recorded around the reservoir and adjoining fields. A Roe Deer was seen just outside the village along the Woodbridge Road on the 29th May. Hares are seen regularly in the fields along Woodbridge Road.

A squashed newt was an unusual road casualty on Ipswich Road by the golf course on 22nd April.

Christine reported that there were hundreds of tadpoles in her garden pond on the 5th May.

Two Speckled Wood butterflies were flying on the path next to the Village Hall on the 22nd April and, in late afternoon sunshine after a day of pouring rain, three were seen near the golf course on the 29th April. An Orange-tip was in Christine's garden on the 23rd April and a Brimstone on the 11th May. A Holly Blue was in Sandy Lane and two Peacock butterflies near the green lane on the 13th May. During the sunny spell Orange-tips seemed to do well and both males and females were frequent visitors in the garden. They lay their eggs on Garlic Mustard or Jack-in-the-Hedge, which the larvae use as a food plant. As their name implies Holly Blues lay eggs on Holly for the first generation in the year, but the 2nd generation, in the summer, uses Ivy.

Azure Damselflies were egg-laying in a pond in Fishpond Road on the 25th May.

Bee orchids have appeared in a couple of locations. (photo below)

For this edition I am grateful to the following contributors: Joe and Kit Clark, Pam Crawley, Serena Gold, Agnes Gross, Christine Fisher Kay, Liz Kennedy, Anne Maddison, Donna Morgan, Sally Redfern, Alexis and John Smith, Judith Stinson, Mary Tucker

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Bee Orchid

