



## **‘What’s About’**

**No 32**

### **Summer’s end and Autumn 2012**

This is a catch-up edition of the relatively few sightings that I had during the late summer months – perhaps the miserably dull summer weather was to blame - and the autumn period up to mid November.

Successful breeding in one of our Barn Owl boxes was a highlight of the summer. Three chicks were raised, ringed and during their juvenile stages, were watched flying in the vicinity of their nest box tree. Let’s hope they survive the winter and next year help to colonise other boxes around the locality.

Christine’s organisation of the Spotted Flycatcher project resulted in 40 nest boxes being distributed around the village. Although we had no reports of Spot Fly’s using the boxes this year one pair did nest successfully in a well-established box in a climbing hydrangea on the garage wall in Mary Tucker’s garden. In other parts of the village single Spotted Flycatchers were seen on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June, and Max Pemberton had one in his garden on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sept. Some of these birds might have been first year birds, and it’s possible that nesting took place in other parts of the village.

Swifts arrived late and I’m not sure how successful their breeding season was. It’s likely that the poor weather and lack of insects caused them not to breed before they departed before the end of August to their African wintering grounds. Two Swift nest boxes have been attached to the north gable wall of Morven in School Road, where in the past Swifts have nested in the eaves. The national paucity of nesting Swifts has been of concern this year, so let’s hope that 2013 brings better weather and successful breeding in the village.

Sparrowhawks have made regular hunting forays into gardens. Sally Rigby noted that 2 Collared Doves and probably a Woodpigeon had been taken from her garden. Christine watched a Starling being unsuccessfully chased through her garden on the 6<sup>th</sup> Aug. and Linda Wilkins reported a kill in her garden on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct. There have been other kills reported including one on the 10<sup>th</sup> Nov when a tumbler pigeon was taken.



*Sparrowhawk by Ros Burfield*

In June Bullfinches were noticed. A pair was seen on Heath Road out of the village near the golf course and also in Rose Cottage garden in Fishpond Road, and a single male was feeding on the seeds of Forget-Me-Not in Pam Crawley's garden. Two male Bullfinches were seen in Sally's garden on 3<sup>rd</sup> July and a single male on the 13<sup>th</sup> July.



*A Collared Dove that attempted to nest in a hanging basket.*

*Photo by Sally Rigby*

At least 5 Wrens fledged from a nest in ivy on Christine's house on 18<sup>th</sup> June and in early August a Tree Creeper was spotted on an oak tree in her garden.

A Turtle Dove was heard in Manor Cottage thicket on the 28<sup>th</sup> June, the 7<sup>th</sup> July and again on the 27<sup>th</sup> July. One was heard calling on the 21<sup>st</sup> July at Novocastria.

An adult Red-legged Partridge with 10 chicks was seen near the Thatched Cottage on 5<sup>th</sup> July. A Cetti's Warbler continued to be heard at the reservoir until late summer.

Whitethroats called from several hedgerows including that of Church Field, where Skylarks could be seen throughout the season and a pair of Linnets took up residence.

2 adult Shelducks and 9 young birds were at the down-stream end of the moorings on the 24<sup>th</sup> July.

Oystercatchers didn't choose the roof of Debenair as a nest site this year but elsewhere hatched 3 chicks that as juveniles could be seen on the saltings in front of Debenair.

6 Whimbrel were calling as they flew over the river on the 26<sup>th</sup> July - autumnal migration was starting.

By the 23<sup>rd</sup> Aug Tawny Owls were beginning to call at night and in early September Starlings began to collect in the ivy on the telegraph pole outside Christine's house.

A male Marsh Harrier was seen quartering the salting below Cross Farm on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1 was over the field below Fishpond Road on the 1<sup>st</sup> Oct. Several sightings have been made in the last couple of months, the latest being over the marsh below the reservoir on the 15<sup>th</sup> Nov., where it put up an Avocet and some Widgeon, all of which flew off to the island.

A Greenshank was calling up-river of the moorings on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sept

A Blackcap was 'tecking' noisily from the elderberry near Whitehall corner on 14<sup>th</sup> Sept and a Chiffchaff was calling in the same area on the 17<sup>th</sup> Sept.

A Little Owl was heard at Church Farm on the 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept. Barn Owls were seen occasionally over the grazing marsh during the summer and early autumn by early morning and late afternoon walkers of the river bank path.

Green Woodpeckers haven't been heard 'yaffling' in the cricket meadow valley but one was pecking on the lawn in Sally's garden on the 1<sup>st</sup> Aug.

Buzzards became noticeable over the village in late August. One was near Rudd's Barn on the 14<sup>th</sup> Aug, 1 over Fishpond Road on the 26<sup>th</sup> Aug and 2 over the grazing marsh on the 20<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1 over Sunnyhill on Oct 11<sup>th</sup>.

A Kingfisher was seen at the reservoir on the 13<sup>th</sup> Sept. It flew a circuit of the lake before alighting on the silver birch which grew on the raft. A Kingfisher was at Howe's Farm reservoir on 20<sup>th</sup> Sept.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> Sept approx 150 Swallows and House Martins were perched on the electricity lines behind Blaxhall in Fishpond Road and on the same day 60+ were perched on the railings of the Boatyard jetty.



By the end of September the number of Redshank, Curlew, Grey Plover and Widgeon was still quite low.

*House Martins nested late in the year at the Village Hall.  
Photo by Christine Fisher Kay*

A possible Great White Egret was sighted on the saltings below Manor Cottage on the 28<sup>th</sup> Sept.

20+ House Sparrows congregated in the bramble in Sally's garden hedge on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct, whilst Great Tits, Blue Tits, a Coal Tit and Goldfinches descended on the garden bird feeder. It's worth watching feeding parties of finches and other birds. Apart from observing the antics of a feeding flock it is amongst the flock that less frequently seen species such as Siskin and Brambling can sometimes be sighted. On the 28<sup>th</sup> Oct Ros Burfield watched 4 Brambling feeding in her garden. They were put up by a Sparrowhawk that was unsuccessful in its hunt.



*Brambling  
Photo by Ros Burfield*

A few Goldcrests have been seen. 2 were in a tamarisk in Max Pemberton's garden on the 8<sup>th</sup> Nov and 2 were in the conifers at the entrance to Low Farm on the 11<sup>th</sup> Nov.

A flock of at least 50 Goldfinches has been over the Hemley marshes and the Waldringfield island during October. There have been some Linnets in the flock over the island and now it's time for Twite, which, earlier in the year, will have bred in northern Britain, to appear on the saltings to forage on seed heads.

30 Brent Geese were around the island on the 14<sup>th</sup> Oct. and 5 Cormorants were feeding close together off Debenair on the 15<sup>th</sup> Oct. Towards the end of October the number of wintering birds had begun to increase on the river. On the 29<sup>th</sup> Oct 300+

Widgeon, 50+Teal, 234 Brent Geese, 14 Pintail, 14 Great Crested Grebe, 30+ Curlew and 1 Greenshank were counted on this side of the river and between The Tips bay and the island. The number of Brents seems to have reduced since then, with about 70 being regularly counted at roosting time at the lower end of the island. Their atmospheric calling on these recent misty mornings and at dusk makes the river a very special place.

5 Avocet were feeding along the shoreline just above Swan's Nest on the 30<sup>th</sup> Oct. and there are often Avocet on the far side of the river just below the island. 20+ counted on the 11<sup>th</sup> Nov. A Greenshank was near Swan's Nest on the 13<sup>th</sup> Nov.

By late Oct large numbers of migrant members of the thrush family were arriving from the continent. A flock of 50+ Redwing flew over the Rudd's Barn area on the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Oct and on the following days the number of noisy Blackbirds feeding in the hedgerows and in gardens increased considerably. On the 29<sup>th</sup> Oct 15 Blackbirds and 2 Song Thrushes were feeding on the Hawthorn berries on the lane to Manor Cottage. At about that time there was an invasion of Jays from the continent, where the acorn harvest has failed this year. Flocks of 30+ were seen flying in off the sea in east Suffolk and although we seem to have a few more Jays about I have no sightings of flocks of Jays here. Probably they flew inland in the hope of finding a good acorn supply. Here many of the acorns that began to form in the early part of the year later developed the wrinkly Knopper Gall.

A late Wheatear and a Tawny Owl calling in daylight were near Manor Cottage on the 4<sup>th</sup> Oct.

2 Sandwich Terns, 4 Little Egrets and a Heron were just below the dinghy park on the 6<sup>th</sup> Oct and a Kestrel was hunting over Church Field on the same day.

A Peregrine was watched making 3 half-hearted, perhaps playful, stoops at a Kestrel over the Waldringfield/Hemley saltmarsh on the 16<sup>th</sup> Nov. The Kestrel, zig-zagging its way out of trouble, flew to the nearby wood.

A Muntjac was watched by Max Pemberton whilst it grazed its way along Sullivan Place at 6.00am on 11<sup>th</sup> July. Joe Lubbock has watched a Muntjac in his garden as have Sally Redfern and Alexis Smith. Muntjac continue to be seen regularly along the roads and field edges around the village.

A Roe Deer was sighted in the stubble field alongside Heath Road opposite the golf course on 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept.

A Badger dug under the fence into Max Pemberton's garden and feasted on growing sweetcorn on 28<sup>th</sup> July - the first time in 50 years of growing sweetcorn that Max's plants have suffered in this way.

A Badger road casualty was found on Heath Road alongside the golf course on the 8<sup>th</sup> Sept and another was found past the Chapel cross-roads on the 19<sup>th</sup> Sept.



*Sweetcorn damaged by a badger.*

*Photo by Max Pemberton*

Single Stoats were seen on 12<sup>th</sup> June on Heath Road bends near the golf course, 1<sup>st</sup> July on Mill Road at Holly Corner. On the 15<sup>th</sup> July a stoat was watched for 20 minutes whilst it cavorted about between the shrubs and plants at Rudd's Barn, and chased nothing but fresh air.

Single Hares and sometimes pairs have been seen on the fields and occasionally on the less frequently driven roads, where they are apt to run for a hundred yards or more before turning through a hedgerow gap.

Jane Norris reported seeing a Hedgehog in her garden on the 25<sup>th</sup> Aug., but I'm not sure that any other hedgehogs have been seen in the village this year - if you know otherwise please let me know. A Hedgehog road casualty was found at Brightwell on the 19<sup>th</sup> July.

Up to 4 Common Seals have been seen on the river. One enjoyed thrashing about in the shallows below the dingy park in late Sept for Mullet and one was seen swimming off Debenair on the 8<sup>th</sup> Oct. A young seal was up on the saltings close to the path towards Early Creek on the 17<sup>th</sup> Oct. Fortunately it slithered back into the safety of one of the creeks before it suffered serious disturbance.

A Great Diving Beetle was found in a water butt by Charlie Clover on 27<sup>th</sup> June.



*Great Diving Beetle  
by Charlie Clover*

Tadpoles, Frogs and Toads seemed to do well this year, perhaps the dull, damp weather suited them!



*Speckled Wood  
by Christine Fisher Kay*

Butterflies did poorly generally, although good numbers of Ringlets and Meadow Browns were recorded. Common Blues appeared on Church Meadow but Holly Blue numbers crashed in the poor weather as did Peacock and Red Admiral. Improved weather in late August and early September encouraged an increase in Comma, Red Admiral and Small Tortoiseshell, and light winds from a generally southerly direction probably brought in migrants of these species from the near continent.



*Goat Moth caterpillar (3.5 inches  
long) found in Sandy Lane*



A few plants of a parasitic Broomrape (probably Common) flowered on the verge opposite the Baptist Chapel during late June and July.

*Broomrape*

For this edition I am grateful to the following contributors: Jill and Michael Atkins, Janette Brown, Ros Burfield, Joe and Kit Clark, Charlie Clover, Pam Crawley, Serena Gold, Christine Fisher Kay, Liz Kennedy, Joe Lubbock, Anne Maddison, Donna Morgan, Jane Norris, Max and Margaret Pemberton, Sally Redfern, Sally Rigby, Alexis and John Smith, Judith Stinson, Mary Tucker, Linda Wilkins

Please send your sightings to:

Peter Maddison, Barnmead, Fishpond Rd

[prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk)

