



‘What’s About’

**No 34
April – June 2013**



Hen Pheasant and four chicks that visited Stan Baston’s garden on several occasions. Photo by Stan Baston

The start of the breeding season was late, but eventually a few spells of sunny, settled weather gave some hope of success to nesting birds and recently several people have reported quite large numbers of young birds of various species in their gardens. This was particularly evident where people continued to stock their garden feeders. Sally wrote on the 20th June, ‘There are so many bird families on my feeders just now - ie blue tits, great tits, a few coal tits, greenfinches, goldfinches, starlings - all vying for space, plus blackbirds on the grass and daily visits from the great spotted woodpecker adult and young. The young are still being fed by adults though feeding on their own too. I have never known such a high number.’

Christine wrote on the 21st June, ‘Our Great Spotted Woodpeckers have continued to visit the peanut feeder and now a juvenile one is there frequently; the female adult also there this morning. Currently there are fledglings of blackbird, blue tit, great tit & robin about and over the last 2-3 weeks also lots of young sparrows, starlings, and dunnock (2 fledglings).’



Recent research has shown that the survival rate of fledgling Great Spotted Woodpeckers is higher where supplementary feed is available.

A juvenile Great Spotted Woodpecker in Pam Crawley's garden

Photo by Pam Crawley

These observations are encouraging, but there have been reports of failed nesting attempts of blue and great tits and other insectivorous species. Unless there is a sustained period of warmth the insect population upon which they depend will not be sufficiently abundant.

The first Cuckoo was heard in the area of the golf course and Rudd's Barn on the 17th April and then, throughout the parish, a cuckoo was heard every day to the end of the month and into May. On still days they could be heard on the Sutton side of the river too. Their calling was not so apparent in the second half of May but by early June it was heard again mostly from along the riverside vegetation and near to the reservoir.

The Barn Owls have not been seen daylight flying during this spring as much as in previous years. That might be taken to be a good sign, ie vole numbers are high and adequate food can be caught at night. But this year the vole population is low and the extended cold winter might have prevented Barn Owls from acquiring sufficient fat reserves for breeding. Our nest box monitoring would bear this out as only one chick has hatched, and at a much later hatching date than last year. During June daylight feeding became more apparent.

A Chiff chaff was heard at the reservoir on the 5th April and during the weekend of the 13th and 14th April they were heard again at the reservoir, and at Novocastria, Plum Tree Cottage, Manor Cottage and Church Farm. Since then their song has been heard frequently around the village.

A Nightingale was heard at Manor Cottage on the 13th April, where 2 singing males took up residence for the season.

Two Swallows were over Sullivan Place on the 13th April and a House Martin was over Fishpond Road on the 15th April. House Martins were building two nests at Sally's house on the 15th June. They are nesting at the Village Hall and in Fishpond Road too. Small numbers of Swifts fly overhead but does anyone know of a nest site in the village?

Although there was an influx of summer migrants over the 13th – 14th April, Siskins and Bramblings were still coming to some garden feeders.

By the 20th April Whitethroats were beginning to take up residence in suitably thick hedgerows and Blackcaps were singing from the few glorious wilder patches that remain in the village.

Two Whimbrel were high tide roosting on the field beside Manor Cottage track on the 20th April and Whimbrel remained in the salt marsh area for at least the next fortnight.

A Wheatear was on the river wall on the 26th April

On the 4th May The Clovers watched a Song Thrush attack a medium size toad, stab at it and then begin to eat it - an unusual occurrence, has anyone else observed a bird attacking a toad?

A pair of Yellowhammers was in the Woodbridge Road golf course hedge on the 13th May and another pair on the riverside meadow on the 16th May. A pair has been seen along Mill Road by Church Field and also along Manor House track.

Hunting Sparrowhawks became more evident by mid-May. One, carrying a blackbird, flew into a window of Donna Morgan's house on the 19th May. In shock it dropped the blackbird, which took the opportunity to make its escape, but a chase ensued, up out of the garden and away. On the 21st May a Sparrowhawk made at least three forays through Sally's garden and on the last flight caught a Blue Tit. A Sparrowhawk was seen there again on the 29th May, but if it intended to hunt it was unsuccessful in catching any of the 15 Starlings feeding on the lawn.

The reservoir was busy towards the end of May: a pair of Greylag, a pair of Tufted Duck and two Mute Swans took up temporary residence for the next few days. A Reed Warbler babbles constantly next to the footpath.

On the 25th June 2 pairs of Linnets were sighted in the gorse at the northern end of the riverside meadow and another pair were seen on Church Field. Another pair has been seen on the river wall in the vicinity of Swan's Nest. A mixed flock of 25-30 Linnets and Goldfinches were seen on the 28th June feeding in the rape field by Howe's farm.

Buzzards are often seen in the Kirton Creek area, as are Marsh Harriers, but a Buzzard was over Woodbridge Road near Howe's Farm on the 1st June and one was over Fishpond Road on the 4th June.

A Turtle Dove was heard in the trees along the green lane on the 3rd June.

On the 4th June a Spotted Flycatcher was seen perched on the roof of the Village Hall, before it flew off to take a typical flycatcher hunting position in the car park oak. On the 21st June a pair spent some time in a garden in Fishpond Road.

Janet Elliott reports that a Little Owl has been seen regularly on the wires along Mill Road and that a Barn owl makes frequent flights over Church Field.

A Pygmy Shrew was watched by Max Pemberton in his garden and during the ten minutes that it remained he was able to photograph it from a distance of only nine inches.



Pygmy Shrew
Photo by Max Pemberton

A Stoat was watched in Fishpond Lane on the 29th April and two were seen at the top of the green lane on the 10th June.

Bats were seen flying in Sunnyhill on the evening of the 15th June. A bat was seen hunting in and out of a conservatory on Fishpond Road.

Frogspawn in Angela's pond on the 11th April was noted as the latest she has known it to appear.

Angela observed two Small Tortoiseshells basking in spring sunshine on the path behind the sailing club on the 11th April. A Comma was in Pam's garden on the 13th and a Brimstone in Kit's garden on the 14th. A Red Admiral was on the green lane on the 28th April. Speckled Woods have been seen frequently in the green lane from the 26th May.

May 16th, a hatching of St Mark's Flies on the river wall - scores of them clinging to the longest grass stems before taking to the air.

The first Maybug, a road casualty, was found on the 7th June.

Honeybees have set up home in a hole in one of the large oaks in the green lane.

A male Stag Beetle was photographed in Pam's garden on the 18th June and a pair was seen there on the 21st.
Two road casualty Stag Beetles were found on Woodbridge Road by the golf course on the 27th June.

Fearsome looking but the antlers, not jaws, are used to interlock and fight other males in courtship battles.



Stag Beetle male
Photo Bob Crawley

Bluebells started to come into flower on the green lane on the 28th April.
May 16th saw Red Dead-nettles in flower and a Hairy-footed Flower Bee feeding on the nectar.
White lacy Rough Chervil lines Woodbridge Road, following on from the Cow Parsley.
You might think that summer has yet to start but a blackberry was already in flower near the Moon and Sixpence on the 8th June!

For this edition I am grateful to the following contributors: Stan Baston, Janette Brown, Joe and Kit Clark, Pam and Bob Crawley, Stella James, Christine Fisher Kay, Joe Lubbock, Angela Mace, Anne Maddison, Anthony and Celia Mason, Max and Margaret Pemberton, Sally Redfern, Alexis and John Smith, Judith Stinson, Julia Stroud, Linda and Jon Wilkins, Neil Winship.

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