



‘What’s About’

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Spring 2014**



Small Tortoiseshell on Erysimum Bowles Mauve PRM

2 Swifts were seen over the village this morning, the 8th May - the first of the late spring migrants. Spotted Flycatchers are to follow!!

Swifts remain on the wing until they nest at the end of this month. By then they will have been joined by other Swifts from the wintering regions of Africa and suitable nest sites high under the eaves and immediate roof spaces of buildings, or in purposely placed nest boxes that mimic their traditional nest sites, will have been chosen. They will have a better year than in 2013, hopefully, when the prolonged cold spring gave them inadequate time to nest before departure at the end of July. I don't think any Swifts nested in the village last year. However, Swallows and House Martins, which are prepared to nest late into the autumn, and raise two or three broods did pretty well in 2013.

The winter seemed to be relatively uneventful. Brent Geese roosted in a flock of several hundred around the island but each morning they departed for the fields and marshes downstream and perhaps to the Orwell. Great-crested Grebes and Little Grebes were on the river as usual, but no Slavonian Grebe this year. Black-tailed Godwits were always on the river's edge and there were plenty of Curlews. Avocet seem to be becoming less wary of human presence and were often counted along the shore on this side of the river as well as their more usual territory downstream of

Stonner Point. Widgeon, Teal and Pintail lined the mud in Methersgate bay and, when they needed shelter, the channels in the saltings on this side of the river, but I had the impression they were not to be seen in the high numbers of previous winters. Perhaps the generally mild weather had not made their flight from Scandinavia quite so necessary. Buzzards and Marsh Harriers were about and a Hen Harrier was reported at Kirton Creek on 30th March.

Good numbers of birds came to garden feeders - they always do when there's free food about! - Greenfinch, Chaffinch and Goldfinch were regular visitors but Siskins and Brambling were absent. Long-tailed Tits, Blue Tits and Great Tits were often seen and Coal Tits were irregular but welcome guests. No Tree Sparrows came to feeders but House Sparrows, Dunnocks and Starlings were noted. Blackbirds were plentiful and Song Thrushes were visitors too, but this winter even solitary Fieldfares and Redwings coming to apples left on the lawn were scarce.

A male Yellowhammer was seen near Plum Tree Cottage on the 22nd Jan and occasionally one was seen along the track to Manor Cottage. 1 near the grazing marsh on the 8th May.

A Sparrowhawk was recorded flying through gardens towards the end of Jan, when evidence of blackbird and pigeon kills were found.

Jays and Magpies have been numerous with groups of 5 or 6 of each species flying noisily between gardens and woodland copses.

A Kingfisher was seen at the grazing marsh ditch on the 10th Feb, and a couple of times near the sailing club in late February

A male Pheasant and 6 females were in Sally's garden on the 4th March

Daytime flying Barn Owls have not been seen very frequently but a pair have been seen hunting in the usual grazing meadow / cricket field valley area and towards Howe's Farm. 3 or 4 noisy Herons were noted in the pines at the Rocks on the 17th March and two were seen on the golf course on the 19th March. In early May 2 hunched and solitary Herons stood like sentinels on the bare earth of the potato field below Sandy Lane.

A Chiffchaff was heard on the 17th March and by the end of March Chiffchaffs, together with Blackcaps, could be heard in several of the wooded areas around the village. 3 Buzzards were over the village and then over the golf course on the 1st April. On the 2nd April a Woodcock flew out of the hedgerow near to the thatched cottage along Woodbridge Road. The first Nightingale was in the Manor Cottage thicket on the 13th April and was heard by Kit, who remarked that the first Nightingale was heard on the 12th April in 2013. The first cuckoo was calling from the area of Howe's Farm reservoir on the 14th April and was then heard frequently from various sites along the river in the following days. 2 were heard calling on the 17th April and on some of the still, quiet early mornings towards the end of the month a cuckoo could be heard calling somewhere over the fields towards Sutton. The first Swallow was over the village on the 15th April and one was seen on the following 2 days. There were 3 over Waldringfield Heath on the 25th April and by the beginning of May a number of nest sites were being inspected by newly arrived Swallows.

Birds continued to come to garden bird feeders and a Great Spotted Woodpecker was attracted to a feeder in Christine's garden on the 17th April and one was at a feeder in Sally's garden on the 20th April.

2 migrant Whimbrels, stopped off on the saltings and were heard calling on the 23rd April.

A Nuthatch was in Christine's garden on the 24th April. This is an unusual bird for the village, perhaps the woodland at the Moon and Sixpence is suitable habitat for them.

A Whitethroat was calling from the hedgerow along Mill Road and another from the scrub hedge uphill from Plum Tree Cottage on the 25th April. Now their scratchy song can be heard from several roadside hedgerows.

4 House Martins were flying around the village hall on the 27th April and a single House Martin flew through Sally's garden and inspected the old nest site under the eaves of the house on the 30th April.

On the 1st May Sally had the good fortune to watch a singing Nightingale, which was just off the path between Manor Cottage and the river.

On the 7th May 4 Common Terns were feeding upstream of the moorings and on the 8th May 2 Sandwich Terns were off the dingy park.

During the late winter period Otter spraints were found at the reservoir and Fallow Deer hoof prints could be seen in the mud along the road edge beyond the church. 6 Fallow Deer were seen near the junction of Woodbridge Road and Newbourne Road on the 30th March and on the 21st April 5 Fallow Deer were seen in the cricket field valley and then along the riverside fields towards Martlesham. A single Fallow Deer was seen again in the riverside fields on the 5th May.

Muntjac seem to be everywhere and pairs have been recorded in gardens in Sunnyhill and near Novocastria as well as in Waldringfield Heath. A Stoat was seen near Rudd's Barn drive on the 16th March and by the golf course on the 18th March and another along the by-road on the 1st May. A Water Vole was watched in the riverside ditch of the grazing marsh on the 1st May.

A Common Seal was seen in the river on the 7th April and on the 9th April John Smith disturbed one which was asleep in the moored sailing club marker buoy barge. It lumbered over the side and disappeared. As John said, "You never have a camera when you need it!"

On a mild day at the start of February Stella recorded a Comma in her garden. On the 9th March 2 Red Admirals and a Comma were recored at Barnmead and on the 11th a Small Tortoiseshell was nectaring on viburnum in Pam's garden.

A Brimstone was seen on the 14th March in Max Pemberton's garden. Male Orange-tips appeared in mid April, followed by the females so that by the end of the month the species was quite numerous and could be seen around garlic mustard, or Jack by the hedge, and honesty on which eggs are laid.

In your garden now!.....



Male Orange-tip

Photo BC



Female Orange-tip nectaring on honesty

Photo Alexis Smith



Female Orange-tip showing mottled under-wing

Photo Alexis Smith

Christine recorded frogspawn in her pond on the 7th March, noting that there were at least 10 frogs in the pond at that time. She remarked that in previous years frogspawn had usually appeared by the start of the month. Frogspawn noted on the 11th March in Sunnyhill.



Frogspawn in Christine's pond
Photo CFK

For this edition I am grateful to the following contributors: Janette Brown, Joe and Kit Clark, Pam and Bob Crawley, Stella James, Christine Fisher Kay, Joe Lubbock, Anne Maddison, Max and Margaret Pemberton, Sally Redfern, Libby Ruffles, Alexis and John Smith

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