



‘What’s About’

**No 37
Summer 2014**



Spotted Flycatcher Success 2014
© Alexis Smith

When the rain stopped, and it did sometime last night, two tawny owls began calling from nearby trees. Perhaps they were overjoyed that their night hunt could begin or, more likely, parent birds were encouraging young owls to move on, fend for themselves, find their own hunting grounds. In the coming weeks there’ll be more hoots and calls as new territories are established. It’s good to know that once again some young owls have been successfully raised around the village.

Small birds have become less evident; the moult is a tricky time for them. Somewhat less capable in flight, many skulk in thick vegetation or gather in feeding parties to

work their way through the branches of oaks and birches. There's much less bird song now, but just recently I heard the thin, wispy song of a robin, made not from a high territorial perch but the side branch of a shrub. It's the song that heralds autumn.

The settled, warm weather of May, June and July benefitted our nesting birds and the reports of parties of young birds in gardens suggest that this has been a successful breeding season. By mid-May family parties of **Starlings** were feeding on garden lawns (7 in Christine's garden in Waldringfield Heath), young **Greenfinches**, **Blackbirds** and a few young **Song Thrushes** were noted at that time around the village. **Swifts** were only just returning, 3 were over the village on the 9th May but it was not until June that 5 Swifts were regularly seen over the village. They will fly several miles from their nest site to forage, so did the birds that continued to be seen over Waldringfield nest in the village or further afield? It would be interesting to know of any Swift nest locations in the village this year.

On the 13th May a **Turtle Dove** was calling in the area between Sandy Lane and Cross Farm. By the 2nd June 2 Turtle Doves were calling and were seen in the same location. They were heard calling throughout June but became less vocal at the start of July when on the 7th they were found to be nesting. Young birds (possibly 2) had flown by the end of the month.

Other Turtle Doves were heard at the quarry at SWT Newbourne Springs on the 19th May and behind the Old Rectory on the 6th July

A **Spotted Flycatcher** was seen on the garage roof at Mary Tucker's house on the 18th May and on the roof of the school on the 21st May. 2 young birds were seen in Mary's garden in early August and at her bird bath on the 21st of August.

On the 4th July 3 Spotted Flycatchers fledged from a box in Alexis' garden.



The adult Spotted Flycatcher with food in beak.



The three nestlings the day before they fledged on the 4th July

Nightingales were heard singing from numerous (!) locations around the village, but nesting success is difficult to gauge. The thicket below Manor cottage, Novocastria, the reservoir, the hedge beyond the reservoir leading out to the saltings, the woodland path beside the school and the thicket at Holly Corner on the Quiet Lane to Hemley. One of the two singing nightingales below Manor Cottage would sing from an open perch and was seen and commented upon by several people.

Barn Owls were not often seen daytime flying during the summer months but one was seen to catch a vole on the grazing meadow on the 31st May. Monitoring of the Barn Owl nestboxes found that only one box was used from which 4 owls fledged, an indication that the food supply was good this year but the number of adult birds in the locality was low. This was almost certainly the consequence of the long, cold winter of 2012/13 which was followed by no successful nesting in the boxes in 2013.

Little Owls were often seen through the summer months along Woodbridge Road, particularly near to the entrance to Howe's Farm and toward the Martlesham T-junction. Also along Ipswich Road by the golf course.

Buzzards have been seen quite regularly flying over the fields around the village and Waldringfield Heath and when time is spent by the river a **Marsh Harrier** is bound to be seen over the saltmarsh and as the summer progressed over the more inland fields too. A possible **Hen Harrier** (white under body) was sighted by Alyson over Church Field on the 25th June.

A **Hobby** flew over the village and was watched chasing a House Martin on the 14th July and a Hobby was seen again on the 19th July

One or two **Cuckoos** continued to call along the river valley throughout June with the last recorded call on the 26th June.

Green Woodpeckers have been scarce, although it was good to hear that a young bird was in Sally's garden digging for ants and feeding on the bird table on the 23rd

August. Great Spotted Woodpeckers have been seen fairly regularly with birds often returning to the same feeding places.

Whitethroats with their scratchy calls have been fairly common in hedgerows but 2 **Lesser Whitethroats** in the hedgerow adjoining Church Field on the 7th July were a nice record. A pair of **Yellowhammers** nested in the hedgerow alongside the track to Manor Cottage.

House Martins at the Village Hall and on Fishpond Road had fledged by early July. 12+ were over Judith's house on the 11th July. Second broods are being raised in August. A young **Blackcap** and **Chiffchaff** as well as young **Robins** from 2 broods were about in Christine's garden in mid-July.

A female **Bullfinch** was seen along the manor Cottage track on the 29th July.

Spilt corn on Mill Road attracted **House Sparrows**, where 40 were counted feeding on the 5th Aug. A flock of 20+ **Goldfinches** and several **Linnets** were feeding on Church Field during the early part July but by August the cloud of foragers had dispersed. Perhaps they were with others feeding on the stubbles in the surrounding fields.

A **Greenshank** was calling as it flew over the village on the 10th July.

2 **Whimbrels** were heard over the river saltings on the 23rd July, 1 on the 4th August and 1 was seen and heard near Marsh Wall Sluice on the 21st August.

2 **Green Sandpipers** were on the saltings by Marsh Wall Sluice on the 24th July and 1 was recorded on the 28th July.

By the 1st August the number of waders on the river had increased. 30+ **Black-tailed Godwits**, similar numbers of **Redshank**, **Lapwings** and **Curlew** could be seen feeding on the mud as the tide receded. Young **Shelduck** numbers have reduced in recent years but a gathering of 12 was noted on the 4th August.

A **Kingfisher** was seen flying along the dyke of the grazing meadow by Jonathan and Rosalind on the 20th August and in the same area they were fortunate enough to see an **Otter**.

A **Stoat** was seen on Woodbridge Road near Rudd's Barn drive on the 13th August.

A **Water Vole** was seen in the grazing meadow dyke on the 3rd June and another on the 19th August.

A **Seal** was watched eating with some difficulty, a good sized, writhing eel on the 1st August.

I have no records of **Hedgehogs** in the village this year. If you have seen a hedgehog, dead or alive, please let me know (for What's About). Linda and Christine would like to know too for the SWT Hedgehog Project.

A number of **Stag Beetles** have been recorded, nearly all as road casualties. On the 10th June 3 Stag beetles were found on Woodbridge Road with their abdomens missing. Crows are often seen in the vicinity, but were not seen on that occasion.

A **Bumblebees'** nest had been dug out by badgers from the hedgerow along School Lane on the 20th August. There are two well-used **Badger** latrine sites on the verge of Woodbridge Road.



*Alexis Smith's photo of a **Violet Ground Beetle** which became a celebrity when its photo was shown on Springwatch.*



Lime Hawkmoth caterpillar (left) and Buff-tip moth caterpillar (right), both 5cms long. Photographed near the Sailing Club in July by Margaret Lake.

In June one plant of the parasitic **Broomrape** grew on the verge near Chapel crossroads and 9 were recorded on Church Field. More than 20 **Bee Orchids** were recorded on Church Field.



A Slime Mould, probably Dog's Vomit Slime Mould, (!!!) that appeared for just a couple of days before decaying on Colin Archer's lawn on the 20th May. Luck for all of us he got his camera out rather than the shovel.

For this edition I am grateful to the following contributors: Colin Archer, Joe and Kit Clark, Pam and Bob Crawley, Rosalind Erskine and Jonathan Webb, Stella James, Christine Fisher Kay, Joe Lubbock, Tony Lyon, Anne Maddison, Jane Norris, Max and Margaret Pemberton, Sally Redfern, Alexis and John Smith, Judith Stinson, Alyson Videlo, Rosa Waller

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