



‘What’s About’

**No 40
Summer 2015**



*Muntjac Buck, Doe and Kid on Pam Crawley’s lawn 30th April 2015
Photo Pam Crawley*

The first **Nightingales** to be heard were in the thicket on Dairy Farm Marsh in mid-April and although one might have moved on quite quickly the other male continued to sing for several weeks. Singing continued throughout the month and then sporadically through May and even on to mid June (18th). Whether breeding took place we don’t know, the males usually stop singing once nesting begins, but certainly the work on the Marsh didn’t prevent this bird from taking up a territory. Other Nightingales, that in due course went quiet, were heard at the reservoir, the bramble hedge on the path leading out to the river wall south of the village, at the Moon and Sixpence and in the thicket adjacent to the model helicopter club site.

The first **Cuckoo** arrived in mid-April and calling continued from around the village throughout May and early June. Visitors at Quayside watched a Cuckoo perched on

the back of a garden chair on the 18th June. A particularly late bird was heard 'cuckooing' on the Hemley Marshes on the 2nd July.

A **Greenshank**, which was almost certainly migrating northwards, was heard over the river on the 23rd April and on the same day 12 **Shelduck** had assembled on one of the potato fields in the cricket field valley. A few days after that most pairs had dispersed to their nest sites. Also on the 23rd April a **Swallow** was seen over Church Field and 2 were seen there on the 26th April. A **Nuthatch** was in Christine's garden on the 23rd April. A migrating **Whimbrel** was calling over the river on the 23rd April. By the 24th April **Rooks** had built 24 nests in Fishpond Road and 45 nests were counted at the Moon and Sixpence



Bluebells flowering on Church Field 12th May Photo Christine Fisher Kay

In late April a **Barn Owl** was seen daylight feeding, usually in the early morning, over Dairy Farm Marsh. It's known that regionally the vole population has not been as plentiful this year and if the Barn Owl's night hunting has not been sufficiently productive it will hunt in daylight. Consequently, daylight observations are not particularly good news. A Barn Owl was seen hunting over Church Field in the middle of the day on the 1st June. Janet Elliot commented that there had been strong winds prior to this sighting so the owl might not have been able to hunt recently. On the 2nd June Tony Lyon watched a Barn Owl in a tussle with a Kestrel over Dairy Farm Marsh. The argument was probably over who had the right to hunt there.

A single **House Martin**, possibly the first to arrive here, flew over Fishpond Road on the 21st April. On the 25th May House Martins started building in a new nest site in the peak of Max and Margaret Pemberton's garage.

Swifts (2) were first seen on the evening of the 6th May and again on the following day. 3 Swifts and 4 House Martins were over Sunnyhill on the 9th May. By 19th June young Swifts had taken to the air and 8 screaming birds were over the quay on that day. 16 Swifts were feeding over Sandy Lane just ahead of the rain on the 5th July.

Swifts, House Martins and Swallows are all under threat. Swifts have declined nationally by 50% in the last 20 years and I doubt if there has been a breeding pair in the village this year. House Martin numbers have declined but not so dramatically and a number of houses and the Village Hall have afforded nest-building opportunities. It seems that modern houses and those that have been refurbished with plastic soffits make unsuitable nest sites for House Martins as the mud for their nests does not stick to plastic. Species-specific artificial nests which are attached under the eaves have been shown to be successful for both the Swift and House Martin (although a Swift box in the village has provided a nest site for a pair of Starlings!). Swallows in the west of the country are doing well but here in the east the population has reduced and it is thought that the reduction of grassland and livestock farming is part of the reason for the decline. In the village traditional sites in open garages and carports have been used as nest sites, but have Swallows returned to all these sites this year? I'd be interested to know about gains and losses.

A **Turtle Dove** was 'purring' in Fishpond Road on the 8th May and over the next couple of week was seen and heard several times and came to the feeder in Judith's garden on at least 3 separate occasions. On the 29th May one was heard calling from the oaks on the golf course section of the Ipswich Road. Another was seen on Mill Road past Church Farm on the 1st June and one was heard near the reservoir on the 17th June.

On 13th May two sizeable flocks of **Linnets** (about 20 in each flock) were on Church Field. Occasionally pairs of Linnets can still be seen on the Field as can small flocks of **Goldfinches**.

On the 15th May Christine noted that **Blackbirds, Robins, Wrens** and a **Blackcap** had all been singing in her garden but it was not until this day that a **Song Thrush** was heard singing in her part of Waldringfield Heath. On the 19th

May Christine watched 2 **Wrens** pulling petals off the flowers of *Kerria japonica*, they didn't eat the petals or carry them away, this behaviour remains a mystery.

The **Cetti's Warbler** at the reservoir continued to call until the 21st May but since then the strident call has ceased, or have I missed it?

Single **Buzzards** have been seen occasionally overhead. Probably there have been quite a lot circling overhead but to see them you do have to look up and it ain't natural or comfortable to walk around with your neck craned backwards! A Buzzard was seen being mobbed by Rooks over Low Farm on the 19th May. **Sparrowhawks** that fly at hedge height are more likely to be seen but now that most garden bird feeders have been stored away they spend less time harrying garden birds, instead patrolling field hedgerows and woodland edges. A **Kestrel** has often been hovering over Sandy Lane and Fishpond Road, and over Church Field. A **Little Owl** was seen on Woodbridge Road by the golf course on the 23rd May. One was seen on Woodbridge Road out past Howe's Farm on the 12th June, and Janet Elliot noted that a Little Owl had been seen quite frequently in Mill Road on the electricity cables



Verge by the Playing Field
Photo Christine Fisher Kay

outside her house and also perched on her house balcony railings. On the 27th May Sally watched a male **Marsh Harrier** with prey in its talons thermalling over Hemley marshes. Another harrier joined it, but no food passing took place and the two disappeared out over the river. A male Marsh Harrier was hunting over the saltmarsh below Manor Cottage on the 9th June. A young **Tawny Owl** was found not far from the Village Hall on the 3rd July.

Towards the end of May, in that period of cool, if not cold winds, birds on the river dwindled considerably and on the 22nd May only one bird, a Black-headed Gull, could be seen on the shoreline between the Quay and the point opposite the Tips, and through June the river remained fairly quiet. **Common Terns** must have been fishing in our part of the river before the 24th May but this is the first record that I have of them.

Two **Oystercatchers** were distraction calling along the new river wall on the 17th June - perhaps there was a young bird nearby.

25 adult **Shelduck** were sheltering in the creeks of the saltings adjacent to Cross Farm on the 4th June. They will have been both non-breeding birds and those whose clutches had hatched. Chaperoned by 3 females a crèche of 12 very young Shelduck bobbed in the wavelets on the outer edge of the salting.

An interesting new species on Dairy Farm Marsh was 2 **Avocets** on the 6th and 7th June and then 4 on the 17th June. It is not unusual to see Avocets near here in the winter months but it is unusual to see them upriver of the village in the summer.



*Shelduck on the saltmarsh
Photo Donna Morgan*



*Canada Goose on Dairy Farm
Marsh island Photo Janette
Mace*

The number of young birds in gardens was noted particularly in the first week in June: **Blackbirds, Starlings** and **Great Tits** in Christine's garden and noisy **Starlings** and

Magpies in Sally's garden. By mid June Sally had seen young **Coal Tits**, **Greenfinches** and **Blue Tits** in her garden, and a **Great Spotted Woodpecker** had been coming to fat balls. We've had a **Magpie's** nest in Fishpond Road and a couple of noisy fledglings, demanding food from their parents, have been squawking through the gardens here. I haven't seen anywhere near as many young birds of other species in our garden this year although I know nests have been built.

Several **Yellowhammers** have been seen: Sandy Lane, Dairy Farm Marsh, the hedge along the saltmarsh out past the reservoir, Mill Road past Church Farm and at least 2 pairs on the golf course. Let's hope that they have had a successful nesting season.

Good news on the 24th June - Alexis emailed to say that a pair of **Spotted Flycatchers** were nesting again in their garden and an update on the 4th July noted that 3 chicks were poking their heads out of the nest box. On the 29th May a **Spotted Flycatcher** was seen in characteristic pose catching insects in the yard next to River's Hall.

A flock of about 20 **Black-tailed Godwits** was on the tideline just below the village on the 3rd July.

Two **Brown Hares** were on the field beside Manor Cottage on the 21st April.

Adult male **Muntjac**, a female and her kid were photographed in Pam Crawley's garden on the 30th April. Probably the same two animals were in Sally Redfern's garden on the 15th May and just half an hour after that visitation a large **Fox** sauntered through her garden. A Pair of Muntjac were on Sue and Stan Baston's lawn on the 2nd June.



Muntjac photo by Sue Baston

5 doe **Fallow Deer** were watched on a field near Plum Tree Cottage on the 4th May.

A **Hedgehog** was seen in Cliff Road on the 10th May.

A **Common Seal** was noticed by members of the sailing club who were in the vicinity of Methersgate on the 23rd May.

The evening of the 6th June must have been slightly warmer as **bats** were seen flying along the hedgerow in Sally's garden and Alexis noted bats in her garden on the 9th June.

A dead **Badger** was found in Mill Lane towards White Hall on the 27th June.

The 20th April was a relatively mild day and **Brimstone**, **Comma** and **Orange-tips** were recorded in Waldringfield Heath.

2 **Painted Lady** butterflies were seen on the perennial wallflower 'Bowles Mauve' on the 5th June. Rich in nectar it's an excellent insect plant and does well in our sandy soil. Recent sunshine and warmth have brought out large numbers of **Meadow Brown** and both **Large** and **Small Skippers** can be seen nectaring on roadside

brambles. **Red Admirals**, **Peacocks** and **Small Tortoiseshells** have been more or less absent during June but the new generation will be hatching out soon, as will **Ringlet** and **Gatekeepers**. In shady places look out for the **Speckled Wood**. Before long the tiny blue butterfly, the **Holly Blue** will be egg laying on ivy. An occasional **Hornet** has been recorded but **Wasps**, so far, have been largely absent. An early record of a male **Stag Beetle** was recorded by Jackie Naylor on the 5th June.



Stag Beetle male showing 'antlers'. Photo Jackie Naylor

A female **Lesser Stag Beetle** was found in Woodbridge Road (road casualty) on the 12th June.

2 male **Stag Beetles** were found on Woodbridge Road (road casualties) on the 20th June and an alive female near Rudd's Barn on the same day.

A female Stag Beetle with abdomen missing was found in Fishpond Road on the 27th June. In the first week in July a further 5 Stag Beetles (all road casualties) have been found on the roads around the village. The beetles are active in the evenings and are often killed when they all too slowly cross roads. The season of the emerging adult beetles lasts into mid July. I'd be very interested in any records - dead or alive - that you might have.

Bee orchids were late appearing, only 2 were visible on Church Field on the 7th June, but 11 had appeared by the 25th June. 3 were found on a roadside verge outside the village.

For this edition I am grateful to the following contributors: Sue and Stan Baston, Neil Cawthorne, Joe and Kit Clark, Charlie and Stephen Clover, Pam and Bob Crawley, Janet Elliot, Rosalind Erskine and Jonathan Webb, Christine Fisher Kay, Serena Gold, Stella James, Margaret Lake, Sue and Steffen Larsen, Joe Lubbock, Tony Lyon, Angela Mace, Janette Mace, Anne Maddison, Donna Morgan, Jackie Naylor, Max and Margaret Pemberton, Sally Redfern, Alexis and John Smith, Judith Stinson, Alyson Videlo, Linda and Jon Wilkins, Neil Winship

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