



‘What’s About’

**No 41
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Black-tailed Godwits over the Deben photo Alexis Smith

The equinox has passed and winter birds are returning to the river. Black-tailed Godwit are feeding again along the tideline and there is a flock of 40 or so birds on this stretch of the river. Redshank, Lapwing, Grey Plover and Curlew can be heard and seen on the saltmarsh and of the winter duck Widgeon and Teal are beginning to return, but remain in low numbers. It will take a cold wind from a northerly direction to kick-start the real invasion of wildfowl, but for the time being that’s not necessarily what we want. A few more days of sunshine, please!

Some of the earliest non-breeding migrants began to return in July. On the 11th of the month 4 **Whimbrel** were heard calling and were seen as they flew over the river in the early morning. By then non-breeding **Lapwings** from northern counties had appeared in small numbers over the saltmarsh and they were spotted roosting on the newly created island of Dairy Farm Marsh (DFM).

On a calm evening early in July just as the sun was setting Janet Elliot watched **Black-headed Gulls** *'arriving over Church Field (perhaps 40/50 birds in total) and then very quietly flying low over the long grass area of the field - a little bit like swallows might behave. It was rather lovely and as I say, almost silent.'* The gulls would almost certainly be feeding on flying ants that on a warm afternoon and evening will rise up to disperse from their nests.

On the 8th July about 30 **Swifts** were feeding over Church Field. This was in the early morning when light drizzle was falling. 5 screaming Swifts passed over the village on the 16th July. Does anyone know if breeding took place in the village this year?

Several people noted that in July young birds of many of the common garden species were feeding on their lawns: **House Sparrows**, **Wrens** and even 4 juvenile **Green Woodpeckers** fed noisily in the oak in Christine's garden. On 17th July Sally noted a Green Woodpecker feeding on her lawn and the bird became a fairly frequent visitor in the following weeks. A juvenile Green Woodpecker was feeding on the bird feeder in Sally's garden on the 25th July and one was watched feeding on her lawn on the 25th Aug. and again on the 15th Sept.

An **Oystercatcher** attempted to nest, but not surprisingly was unsuccessful, on a hefty stump in front of Debenair.

On the 12th July **House Martins** fledged from their nest on Tony and Chris Lyon's house, in the nick of time, Chris said, as the nest fell down on the following day!

2 **Turtle Doves** were heard calling and were seen perched on the wires in front of Judith's house on the corner of Sandy Lane on the 15th July and 1 was heard in Sally's garden on the 19th July. The two birds remained in the surrounding Sandy Lane and Fishpond Road gardens for the summer and probably nested. The last bird to be seen was on the 14th September.

A **Whimbrel** was seen and heard calling on the saltmarsh below Manor Cottage on the 17th July and on the same day two adult **Shelduck** chaperoned 2 juv Shelduck along the edge of the river - only 2 juveniles, there ought to have been a flotilla of at least a dozen.

A female **Bullfinch** was seen in Fishpond Road on the 26th July.

On the 31st July A **Kingfisher** was seen on DFM and 30 mins later the same bird, most probably, was seen flying just off the beach.

A **Greenshank** was on DFM on the 23rd July and a **Whimbrel** was on the nearby salting. A **Green Sandpiper** was on DFM on the 29th July.

August was a quieter month, the young birds that had fed on lawns progressed to the open fields and hedges. **Starling** families began to feed in large parties and 31 birds were counted sitting on the wires in Waldringfield Heath on the 2nd Aug. 26 Swallows were on the wires in Deben Lane on the 5th Aug. **Buzzards** were seen fairly regularly, one flew over the field below Sandy Lane, before continuing over the river to the Tips on the 5th Aug and one was over the fields to the north of Fishpond Road on the 19th Aug and at Church Farm wood and stubbles on the 20th Aug. Another was noted circling over Sunnyhill on the 27th Sept.



One of the near-to-fledging Barn Owls

A **Barn Owl** was seen during daylight hours on the 17th July hunting on DFM before flying over the river to the Sutton side. This was an unusual sighting but one month later on the 17th Aug there was a similar occurrence. Poor weather at night or a lack of prey drives hungry Barn Owls to hunt in daylight. One of the Waldringfield nest boxes produced 3 young birds which were ringed, but sadly, about a month later 2 of these were found to have died probably through starvation at the fledging stage. Stock Doves are frequent nesters in empty Barn Owl boxes and we've had Jackdaws and even a Great Tit nest. This year one of the boxes housed a very active **Hornets'** nest. The Barn Owl box monitors haven't been back to that one for a while!



Sparrowhawk in Jonathan and Rosalind's garden

A **Sparrowhawk** visited and perched in Jonathan Webb's garden on the 7th Aug and on the same day Alexis watched a Kestrel hunting over the verge at Chapel cross-

roads. Hovering **Kestrels** have been watched over Church Field and along the track to Manor Cottage. On the 29th Aug Angela-Jane Hall at Rudd's Barn reported that '*a Marsh Harrier flew over the barns coming from the direction of the marshes opposite Methergate quay. All the other birds in the vicinity scattered with alarm as it flew overhead! Quite a sight.*' Late in the summer Marsh Harriers do fly inland away from the river to hunt, and to see one over the fields inland of New Oak Tree Farm is not uncommon.

There must have been several successful **Pied Wagtail** nests. An adult pair with 2 young birds were seen in Village Way on the 12th Aug and there has been a very active pair with their young around the junction of Sandy Lane and Fishpond Road. A pair nest annually at the beach and using the dinghies as perches snap flies along the tree-line. **Linnets** are likely to have nested in the vicinity of Church Field as single birds have been seen through the summer and a pair was noted on the 15th Aug. A **Kingfisher** was seen at the reservoir on the 20th Aug and again on the 31st Aug., in front of Debenair on the 18th Sept and flying just off the beach on the 23rd Sept. On the 23rd Aug Max counted 7 **Magpies** and a **Crow** in his garden, which must be a corvid record!

I don't think there have been quite so many family parties of **Long-tailed Tits** this year but on the 30th Aug Christine noticed a party of 8 birds in Waldringfield Heath.

Meteorological Autumn began on the 1st Sept and on that day 2 Whinchat autumn migrants were recorded on the path and fence posts towards the northern end of DFM. On the 2nd Sept Christine watched '*a Great-spotted Woodpecker extracting a nut from our hazel tree and then flying with it to the oak tree where a couple of cracking sounds seemed to indicate it had got into it.*' Later in the month Sally had noticed Great-spotted Woodpeckers coming into her garden and pecking around the bark of a pine tree.

On the 7th Sept 8 **Little Egrets** were seen to be feeding on DFM. In early September **Tawny Owls** were heard calling much more frequently than in the summer months. On the 8th Sept they were calling at Manor Cottage whilst at the same time others could be heard in the trees at the end of Deben Lane.

A fairly late **House Martin** was seen over the reservoir on the 15th Sept.

An uncommon bird that was seen by Sally to fly over the village back in June was **Common Crane** on the 20th.

In mid July Max Pemberton noticed an adult Muntjac in his garden and later in the day a Muntjac fawn was seen in the garden.

2 Muntjac were observed in the open on DFM on the 23rd July.

In the first week of August a badger dug out a wasps' nest in Max's garden.

On the 26th Aug an Otter was seen by Gillian Gatiss, a visitor from Cambridge, at the reservoir and on the 26th Sept Steve and Geraldine Merritt, who are frequent visitors to the village, watched one on the mink inspection box in the ditch on DFM. Lucky visitors, I've yet to see an otter in the village!

In the early part of the summer butterflies in gardens that were protected from the persistent northerly winds did quite well but the cool, dull weather that followed in August did them few favours and butterfly numbers were not particularly high. Gardeners will say that there were plenty of cabbage whites. Holly Blue seemed to have a good year but few migrant Painted Lady turned up. What happened to those warm southerly winds? A 2nd generation Holly Blue was seen on the 15th July and in warmer spells during August several more were reported. All the common butterflies were seen on Church Field, where Christine noted that the Skippers were showing in good numbers. A late generation Brimstone was in Max's garden on the 9th Aug.

A Hummingbird Hawk-moth was feeding on honeysuckle in Sally's garden on the 9th July. One had been videoed in June as it hovered in front of flowers in Julia Stroud's garden, and Julia watched one again in her garden on the 31st Aug. One was seen feeding at Buddleia 'Dartmoor' in Fishpond Road on the 21st Sept.



A Privet Hawk-moth caterpillar, that sadly had fallen into a butt of water, was found by Stephen Clover on the 10th Sept.



Southern Hawker photographed by Donna Morgan at the Sailing Club on the day of the Yachtsman's Service.

Several single Stag Beetles were found:-

Sandy Lane on the 12th July, Max's drive in Sullivan Place on 22nd July, near the fishpond in Fishpond Road on the 1st August and another on the back road to Woodbridge on the 2nd Aug. On the same morning Betsy found a slightly damaged beetle outside Dormers then later in the day this recognisable female was seen on the road outside Hermanus. A Stag Beetle was found in one of the beach hut gardens on the 2nd Aug and Alexis rescued a late Stag Beetle from a water butt on the 3rd Sept



Female Stag Beetle in Max and Margaret Pemberton's garden

Chicory and parasitic Common Broomrape flowered on the verge opposite the Baptist Chapel.

For this edition I am grateful to the following contributors: Sue and Stan Baston, Joe and Kit Clark, Charlie and Stephen Clover, Pam and Bob Crawley, Janet Elliot, Rosalind Erskine and Jonathan Webb, Christine Fisher Kay, Angela-Jane Hall, Stella James, Margaret Lake, Sue and Steffan Larsen, Joe Lubbock, Chris and Tony Lyon, Angela Mace, Janette Mace, Anne Maddison, Steve and Geraldine Merritt, Donna Morgan, Max and Margaret Pemberton, Sally Redfern, Alexis and John Smith, Judith Stinson, Linda and Jon Wilkins, Neil Winship

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