



'What's About'

No 43
Early 2016

Cool northerly winds in March eventually gave way to a few days of southerlies which aided the arrival of some Spring migrants into the country. A **Chiffchaff** was heard by Sally at Newbourne Springs on the 26th March and they were heard at Manor Cottage, Novocastria garden and at the reservoir on the 29th March. A couple of days later **Blackcaps** were singing in Fishpond Road, Sandy Lane and by the reservoir. A female Blackcap has wintered in the area and has been recorded by Pam on a few occasions when it visited a birdbath in her garden. A **Whitethroat** was heard in the road hedge at Howe's Farm on the 3rd April. It was reported that 4 or 5 **Swallows** passed through the Brightwell valley on the 2nd April but as yet I haven't heard of any sightings in the village. [Latest News See Page 5](#)

This week's changeable weather doesn't seem conducive to migrant arrivals, but in 2015 the first Nightingale was heard on the 13th April and the Cuckoo on the 14th April. House Martins ought to arrive before the last week of the month.

On sunny days Bumblebees – **Buff-tail** and the **Early Bumblebee** - have put in appearances. The latter have been enjoying the flowers of a large patch of Red Dead-nettle that grows in the garden, and on the sunniest days some **Honey Bees** have been about too. Early butterfly sightings have included **Peacock** 10th March, **Red Admiral** 28th March, **Small Tortoiseshell** 28th March, **Comma** 3rd April and that most heartening of the early butterflies, the male **Brimstone**. Flitting through the garden the brilliant sulphur yellow male, which is the first of the pair to emerge from hibernation, lets us know that Spring is on its way. Pam, Kit, Stella, Christine and Alexis reported seeing them on and around the 22nd of March.



Brimstone - of the summer generation on flowering Buddleia!

The appearance of **Frogspawn** in garden ponds also heralds Spring. Christine noticed 5 clumps of frogspawn in her sheltered pond on the 4th March and Pam recorded frogspawn at that time in her pond too. Angela notice frogspawn in her pond during the last week of March. Our pond must be a cold one - we were frogspawn-less until the start of April, by which time frogspawn was hatching in Christine's pond.



Clumps of frogspawn in Christine's pond

The number of winter birds on the river has been slightly lower than expected, but there have been good flocks of **Widgeon** and **Teal**. By the end of March, however, only small flocks remained on the Sutton side and on the Waldringfield saltmarshes. 400+ **Brent Geese** roosted around the island but they dispersed in the early mornings, sometimes feeding along the tideline and occasionally on inland fields. A small group of about a dozen seemed to enjoy the two freshwater ponds that are created each winter in the low-lying part of the field between Sandy Lane and the Wetland Reserve.

Great-crested Grebes can be seen well out from the shoreline through the winter. However, two found a new feeding ground and showed well close to the shore in front of Debenair for a couple of days in mid-March.

A count on the 17th March produced 200+ **Widgeon** in the bay between the Tips and the Hams, 8 male **Pintail**, 1 male **Goldeye**, about 50 **Teal**, 1 **Marsh Harrier**, 9 **Turnstone**, 8 **Avocet** and, grouped together on the spit of land that juts out from the Tips as the tide ebbs, 5 **Heron**. Also, between the island and Methersgate, 191 Shelduck. This was a high count and was just prior to their dispersal for the breeding season.

Short-eared Owl was at Stonner Point on the 20th Jan but this winter none have been seen on the Wetland Reserve.

Little Owls have been seen and heard along the green lane by the golf course.

Buzzards have been recorded frequently throughout the winter period. Often they circle silently high above us but more often than not during March and April they

have been heard calling before they've been seen. 2, 3 or 4 Buzzards have often been in the sky at the same time. Displaying Buzzards, tumbling through the air, were seen over the Rudd's Barn valley. A large bird of prey, the size of a **Marsh Harrier** took a Blackbird from Stephen Clover's garden on the 26th Feb.

Kingfisher was perched at the boatyard and then flew towards the dingy park on 21st Jan and then later in the day 2 were seen on the Wetland Reserve. Sally commented... 'The first was perched on the Marsh Wall sluice rail and was displaced by a second kingfisher. Both flew along the river side of the path northwards. A few minutes later one was back on its Marsh Wall sluice perch and flew up the ditch that runs towards the cricket field'. Kingfishers continued to be seen in March from the Wetland Reserve, along the quay and on to the reservoir.



Kingfishers photographed on the Wetland Reserve by Rie Ramsey-Charles



At high tide it's worth glancing at the jetty below Manor Cottage and the rusty hulk on the saltmarsh. They both become favoured roosts of wading birds. 10 **Turnstones** were on the jetty and 10 **Redshank**, 2 **Turnstones** and an **Oystercatcher** were on the rusty hulk on the 27th Jan.

Curlews are often feeding on the fields alongside the back road to Woodbridge and towards the T-junction at Walk Farm wood. Penny Clover used her phone to photograph a distant white Curlew, a most unusual bird. On the 31st Jan 2014 John Richardson, a Suffolk wildlife photographer, photographed a white Curlew at Martlesham Creek.



Penny's bird will almost certainly be the 2014 bird that had returned to familiar wintering grounds. The bird was seen again in the same vicinity on the 18th March and again on the 23rd March.

White Curlew by Penny Clover

4 pairs of **Hérons** were counted at the Tips heronry on the 18th Feb.

On the 31st Jan, a **Skylark** was singing from high above the stubble in a field off Sandy Lane. It was the kind of day when **Rooks** became active. There was much noise from the rookeries at the Moon and Sixpence and in Fishpond Lane.

During Jan and Feb **Barn Owls** were seen hunting quite frequently in all the usual places, but in March daytime hunting seemed to diminish. Barn Owls were still about occasionally in the early morning, but perhaps their night hunting had been sufficient for their needs.

3 or 4 flocks of **Starlings** were seen to pass over fields to the south of the village and across the river in the early mornings at the start of Feb. At that time Linda had watched a murmuration of Starlings not far from Morrisons in Felixstowe, so perhaps these small flocks were birds dispersing from that roost. In the late afternoon of the 25th Feb a flock of over 1000 Starlings flew over the village in the direction of Felixstowe.

On the 4th March Christine reported that 2 **Bramblings** had been in her garden over the previous four days and up to 3 **Redpolls** had been on a niger seed feeder. She noted also that **Greenfinches** were in good number on the feeders but some of the **Chaffinches** in her garden were suffering from club-foot.

Alexis reported 3 **Grey Partridge** on the field alongside her house in Waldringfield Heath on the 5th March.

2 **Goldcrests** were seen on the 3rd March, the 12th March and again on the 3rd April in Fishpond Road.

My mid-March many species will have sorted out their territories for nesting and food supplies, others will be thinking about it. Alexis watched 4 **Robins**, which are aggressively territorial, having a scrap over food in her garden on the 17th March.

2 **Stock Doves** came to our bird table on the 18th March. They are wary birds and come into the garden only at the quietest of times. On the 21st March Max and Margaret emailed to say that they had had a pair of Stock Doves feeding in their garden. The end of the winter is a lean time for birds – most of the farmland and hedgerow food has been devoured and garden bird feeders take on a renewed importance into April.

A **Sparrowhawk** with a blackbird in its talons was seen on Woodbridge Road on the 20th March.

10 **Redwings** were on a field near Hemley Hall on the 27th March – no doubt a migratory flight to Scandinavia was imminent. 30+ Curlews were on a field nearby

and an unusually strong flock of about 30 **Yellowhammers** were in the field above Plum Tree Cottage. Let's hope they stay in the area for the summer.

Skylarks are singing now over the fields below Sandy Lane and Church Field. Several can be heard over Waldringfield Heath. It is the sound of summer.

An adult **Hedgehog** scurried across the lawn of Janette's garden late in the evening of the 26th Jan.

6 **Fallow Deer** were towards Hemley Hall on the 26th Jan, they had probably been feeding on sugar beet tops.

Muntjac continued to visit gardens and at quiet times 3 could often be seen in the vicinity of the cricket field wood on Fishpond Lane.

On the 11th Feb two canoeists reported seeing an adult **Otter** and 2 cubs swimming near the Tips.

Common Seals rest in Early Creek and on a few occasion 2 or 3 seals have been seen there. Recently, on the 28th March, 2 were seen there. Single seals have been seen swimming through the Waldringfield moorings.

A couple of **queen wasps** were active in Fishpond Road on the 10th March.

A male **Stag Beetle** was found on Woodbridge Road just beyond the houses on a warm and sunny 23rd March. They normally emerge in July. It was alive and it seems likely that it had emerged from the roadside bank where a particularly favourable microclimate had established. Having lived under ground in a rotting tree stump or roots the larva pupates late August to early September inside a cocoon that the larva builds. The pupal stage lasts about six weeks before becoming an adult beetle, which remains sheltered in the cocoon until above ground environmental conditions are suitable for the beetle to emerge. The cue for emergence is probably soil temperature.

Several people have noticed high numbers of **7-spot Ladybirds**. Alexis counted 40 on a gorse bush near her house on the 29th March.

Stitchwort has flowered throughout the winter on the green lane and on verges along Woodbridge Road. **Butterbur** flowers are showing well now in Howe's Farm valley.

LATEST NEWS 13th April [Nightingale heard in the woodland at the northern end of the Wetland Reserve.](#)

[And from Sally on the morning of the 13th March....](#)

[Hi Peter](#)

[The house martins have returned - hunting for insects above my back garden at 5pm yesterday. Also a few bats at dusk.](#)

[Cheers](#)

[Sally](#)

For this edition I am grateful to the following contributors: Joe and Kit Clark, Penny and Stephen Clover, Pam and Bob Crawley, Christine Fisher Kay, Joe Lubbock, Chris and Tony Lyon, Angela Mace, Janette Mace, Anne Maddison, Celia Mason, Max and Margaret Pemberton, Rie Ramsey-Charles, Sally Redfern, Alexis and John Smith, Judith Stinson, Linda and Jon Wilkins, Neil Winship.

Please send your sightings to: Peter Maddison, Barnmead, Fishpond Rd
prmaddison@yahoo.co.uk

