



‘What’s About’

No 45 Late Winter and Spring 2017

2 **Swallows** over Kirrawah field , opposite Seven Acres, on the 9th April and 1 at Hemley on the morning of the 11th show that migration is under way and, should there be a breeze from a southerly, continental direction, **Nightingales** and **Cuckoos** will soon be heard. **Chiffchaffs** have been calling since the middle of March when 1 was heard winding itself up - ‘chiff-chiff-chaff-chiff’ - on the 15th March at the reservoir bushes and after that they were heard in all the likely thickets around the village. A **Blackcap** was heard at the Moon and Sixpence on the 26th March and now they can be heard in well-treed gardens around the village.



*A flock of about 100 Brent Geese arrived at the Hemley shore and pushed the normal waders along
photo: Chris Morton*

The **Brent Goose** flock have roosted around the island and have spent feeding time at various locations along the river, inland and probably over on the Orwell and Stour too. The Hemley mud and other tranquil sites further down river have been favoured. By mid-March numbers had reduced and by the end of the month very few remained on the river. **Widgeon** and **Teal** were present in good numbers during the winter period and, particularly during late Feb and March, 40+ Widgeon and a similar number of Teal could be seen in the early morning on the wetland reserve lagoon. By the beginning of April they had almost all disappeared to the breeding grounds.

December / January

Dates are shown as: day/month. Number of each species is shown in brackets.

Shelduck 19/12/2016 (199), **Avocet** (23), **Widgeon** (200+), **Pintail** males (14), **Great-crested Grebe** (2), all between Methersgate Bay and the island.

Avocet late Dec A fearless individual frequented the mud close to the path at Swans Nest, giving particularly good views to passers-by.

Curlew late Dec White feathered bird seen feeding with other Curlew on the fields towards Walk Wood.

Little Owl 13/12 (1) near Rudd's Barn, 20/12 (1) Mill Road

Tawny Owl 20/12 (2) Mill Road

Common Sandpiper 26/12 (1) feeding near the quay

Black-tailed Godwit 1/1 several on the wetland reserve and more along the tideline, some of which were not concerned about passing walkers.

Pintail male 9/1 (1) on the wetland reserve, 14/1 (1) on wetland reserve where water was mostly frozen, 19/1 (2) wetland reserve

Barn Owls late Dec and through Jan (1 or 2) seen hunting in daylight in various 'long grass' places around the village.



Barn Owls seen passing food 16th Jan photo: John Hovell

Song Thrush a couple of reports of birds singing very early in the season - before Christmas.

Redwing 26/12 small flock in Fishpond Rd

Green Woodpecker 27/12 (1) calling in cricket field valley, 31/1 (1) feeding on lawn in Sally's garden.

Stonechat 2/1/17 (pair) wetland reserve and then seen several times during Jan and Feb up to 25/2

Linnets 5/1 flock of 10-12 at the gorse end of the wetland reserve

Marsh Harrier 10/1 (1) below Manor Cottage, 11/1 (1) Kirton Creek, 19/1 (2) just north of the village, putting up many Curlew, Avocet and Widgeon, 30/1 (2) below Whitehall

Kestrel 19/1 (1) over field to the north of the reservoir. At that time 1 or 2 Kestrels were seen often over Church Field, and along Sandy Lane but have been seen much less frequently since mid-March.

Snipe 17/1 (1) near Swans Nest

Goldeneye 19/1 (7) upstream of the moorings

Velvet Scoter 20/1 (1) reported as 'off Waldringfield' on Birders' Information Networked Service

Kingfishers, 1 and sometimes 2, were often seen perched or flying in the area between the wetland reserve and the reservoir. In the second half of March sightings had ceased, the birds are likely to be further inland at suitable nest habitats.

During the colder winter periods, of which there weren't many days, good numbers of birds came to garden feeders but as far as I'm aware the less usual visitors such as **Brambling**, **Siskin** and **Redpoll** hardly appeared this year.

Brambling 3/1 (1) and 21/2 (1) Fishpond Rd

Goldfinches, **Coal Tits**, **Blackbirds**, **Robins** were recorded in good numbers at feeders, and also **Blue**, **Great** and **Long-tailed Tits**, **Great spotted Woodpeckers**, **Starlings**, **House Sparrows** **Wood Pigeons** and **Squirrels**!

Sadly, a number of **Chaffinch** and **Greenfinch** were recorded with the 'club-foot' disease.

Goldcrests have been occasional winter visitors to gardens and have been recorded by several people. Conifers are a preferred feeding habitat where tiny spiders and insects lurk amongst the needles.



Wing-tagged Marsh Harrier at Kirton Creek/Mill River, early Feb. Photo: Chris Morton

February

Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush 1/2 several individuals singing in the early morning

Brent Goose 2/2 (500+) Hemley

Marsh Harrier, Kestrel, Buzzard 2/2 (2 of each species) Hemley

Marsh Harrier early Feb (1) showing green wing tag at Kirton Creek/Mill River, 24/2 (1) over Sunnyhill, (1) quartering set-aside field at Newbourne

Bullfinch 2/2 (1) Pam Crawley's garden

Yellowhammer 3/2 (2) gorse hedge at Swan's Nest

Skylark 6/2 (1) singing above stubble field by Newbourne Rd/field track

Redwing 13/2 (2) eating cotoneaster berries in garden on School Rd

Goldfinch 15/2 (30) in one of the Churchyard oaks, much calling within the flock.

Buzzard 16/2 (2) below Manor Cottage

Kestrel 16/2 (1) below Manor Cottage

Barn Owl several early morning sightings during the month

House Sparrow 24/2 (about 50) in a Hemley hedge

Green Woodpecker 24/2 (1) calling in cricket field valley

Pintail male 25/2 to end of month (1) wetland reserve

Egyptian Goose 27/2 and 28/2 (1) wetland reserve

Shoveller 27/2 (1) wetland reserve

March / April

Shoveller 1/3 (1) wetland reserve

Pintail male 1/3 (1) wetland reserve, 7/3 (3) wetland reserve, 16/3 (12 males + additional females) a particularly high count on the wetland reserve

Redshank, Turnstone, Oystercatchers and Black-tailed Godwits 2/3 many jostling for space on rusting hulk at high tide.

Widgeon (10), **Teal** (20), **Redshank** (2) mid-Feb to mid-March. This was the typical number of waterbirds on the wetland reserve in the early morning, then numbers increased in the second half of March. On 16/3 to the end of March **Widgeon** (20), **Teal** (30), **Mallard** (4). Then much reduced numbers so that by early April most of the duck had migrated.



Black-tailed Godwit Photo: Chris Morton

Yellowhammer 6/3 (1) Mill Rd hedge near Whitehall, 21/3 (8) on field behind sailing club, 26/3 (20) in field to the south of the school, 10/4 (10) feeding for the past week on Ros Burfield's lawn in Mill Rd



Yellowhammers feeding on lawn. Photo: Ros Burfield

Ringtailed Hen Harrier 6/3 (1) Hemley reported on Birders' Information Networked Service

Skylark 7/3 (2) singing above field on river side of Sandy Lane

Buzzard 9/3 (2) over village, and heard calling and seen regularly throughout the month.

Osprey 12/3 watched by Christine between Methersgate and the Waldringfield moorings. Two attempts to catch fish, one of which was successful.

Green Sandpiper 16/3 (1) wetland reserve, 21/3 (1), 23/3 (1)

Bullfinch 17/3 (1 female) Church Farm road hedge

Treecreeper 18/3 (1) Fishpond Rd

Heron 18/3 (1) feeding after dark on the tideline below the Maybush. Illuminated by the pub's outdoor lights. And again on the evening of the 19/3

Stock Dove 22/3 (1) came to bird table in Fishpond Rd

Goldcrest 26/3 (1) Fishpond Rd, 2/4 (1) Fishpond Rd

Kestrel 28/3 (1) Church Field

Shelduck 5/4 (60) Methersgate bay, (6) wetland reserve

Wheatear 9/4 (1) on field at Chapel crossroads

Whitethroat 9/4 (1) Manor Cottage

Snipe 11/4 (1) wetland reserve



*Red-legged Partridge
near Chapel
crossroads.*

Photo: Alexis Smith

Several people have seen **Badgers** on the roads and field edges at night and, giving some credence to the opinion that the Badger population has increased, a greater number of badgers is being counted as road casualties.

Fallow Deer - a small herd of 5 or 6 has been seen in the area, and in damp, muddy part of fields their slots (hoof prints), which are much larger than those of Muntjac, have been identified.

Common Seal 11/1 (1) Early Creek, 21/3 (1) off dinghy park, 28/3 (3) Early Creek
Stoat 1/4 (1) Golf course hedgerow Ipswich Rd

Red Admiral 14/2 (1) flew out of ivy 1.45pm sunny day

Red Admiral 10/3 (1) Fishpond Rd

Brimstone 20/3 (1) Waldringfield Heath

Small Tortoiseshell and **Brimstone** 27/3 New Oak Tree Farm track to Chapel cross-roads

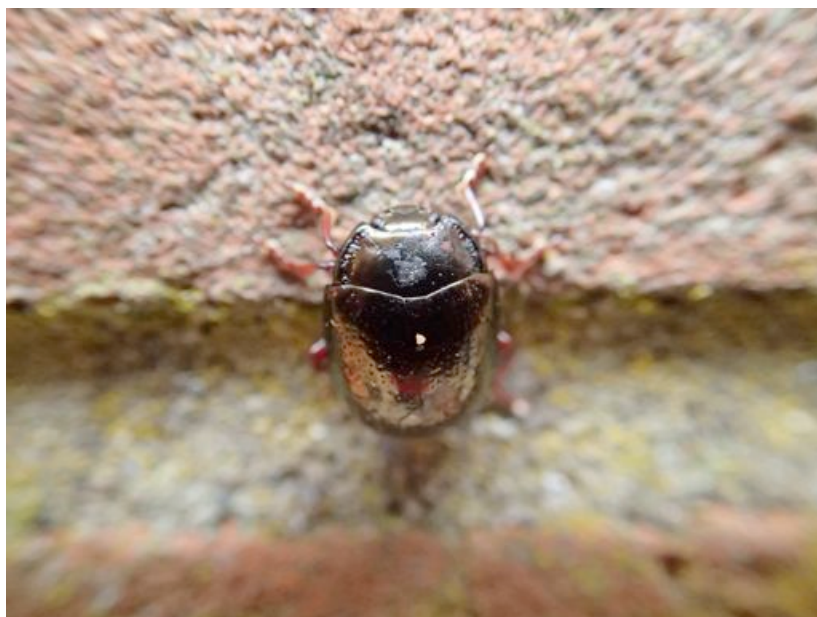
Orange-tip and **Holly Blue** 7/4 Fishpond Rd

Speckled Wood 8/4 Fishpond Rd

Frogspawn in Christine's garden pond, 4/3 and more Frogspawn in the pond 5/3

Tadpoles about 1cm long noticed 31/3

Stitchwort and **Celandines** 26/3 in flower on roadside verges



*Beetle, probably
Chrysolina hyperici ~
dark metallic bronze
with distinct pits on
wing cases.
Photo: Celia Mason*

For this edition I am grateful to the following contributors: Chris Baldry, Ros Burfield, Joe and Kit Clark, Penny and Stephen Clover, Pam and Bob Crawley, Bridget Dearlove, Janet Elliott, Brenda Evans, Serena Gold, Christine Fisher Kay, Margaret Lake, James Lucy, Chris and Tony Lyon, Angela Mace, Janette Mace, Anne Maddison, Celia Mason, Chris Morton, John Ogden, Max and Margaret Pemberton, Sally Redfern, Alexis and John Smith, Judith Stinson, Linda and Jon Wilkins, Neil Winship.

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