



‘What’s About’

No 47
Winter into Spring 2018

Although the first migrant **Chiffchaffs** have usually announced their arrival by the end of the third week in March, last year’s first calling Chiffchaff was particularly early on the 16th March. You won’t be surprised that this year the Manor Cottage thicket and the area around the reservoir remain very quiet. For differing reasons, the Chiffchaffs, you and I, are waiting for a warm southerly breeze.

On a few recent sunny days temperatures in sheltered corners have risen sufficiently into double figures for the first butterflies to break cover for brief flights from their winter hibernation sites. All five of the hibernating butterflies – **Brimstone, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Peacock and Red Admiral** - have been seen around the village.

During the winter period it has been the number of duck on the reserve lagoon that has been notable in the area of the river. During Dec, up to 60 **Widgeon** and 40 **Teal** could be seen in the mornings before the riverside path became too busy. 6 -8 **Mallard, Dabchicks**, 4 young **Mute Swans**, the occasional **Redshank** and **Common Sandpiper** and up to 20 **Black-tailed Godwits** could be seen.

In February and March 4 male **Pintail**, no doubt with some females in amongst the larger flock of other duck, looked resplendent in their breeding plumage, and it was at that time that a **Barn Owl**, sometimes two, could be seen hunting over the reserve. It was good to know that they had survived the coldest of the winter weather and by mid March, when they were hunting during the day, they became a favoured quarry for photographers, with up to 4 long-lenses being lined up on the riverside path in the week before Easter.

An occasional **Grey Heron** and **Little Egret** favoured the sluice end of the lagoon, as did a **Kingfisher** which has been seen quite regularly throughout the winter period between the reserve and the dinghy park. On the river up to 12 **Dabchick** have been feeding amongst the moorings and a little further upstream at least 2 **Great-crested Grebes**, and 6 **Goldeneye** have been on the open water. Towards the Tips/Hams bay large numbers of duck and waders have congregated, particularly to gain shelter when the wind has been in the east. The number of birds there, however, has not

equalled that of previous winters, perhaps some have found the fresh water of the reserve lagoon or feeding grounds elsewhere on the river more to their liking.



*Male Stonechat in the Kirton
Creek area.*

Photo: Chris Morton

Dec 2017

About 200 **Rooks** and **Jackdaws** roosted to the east of the river and early each morning flew as a straggling flock over the river and Waldringfield.

Bullfinches 2 Manor Cottage (11th).

Dead **Mute Swan** cygnet by the fence of the reserve (16th).

Curlew 60+ feeding on the field below the New Rectory (23rd).

January 2018

Christine reported that the usual species were coming to the feeders in her garden but amongst the **Chaffinches** there was a significant number of birds with swollen legs. After the period of snow only healthy Chaffinches came to the feeders. I have noticed fewer **Greenfinches** coming to the feeders this winter. It's a species that suffers from one of the 'bird table' diseases, trichomonosis, causing lesions in the bird's throat.

Avocets haven't been very noticeable along the tide's edge this winter but on the 3rd Jan 50 birds were on the river mud below the reserve.

Brent Geese 600+ flew along the river to the island and exposed mud at Stonner Point (9th), where many chose to roost during the mid-winter months.

A partially white (leucistic) **Curlew** was feeding with other curlews on fields near Martlesham Church in Jan. It's probably the same bird which has been seen in that area in previous winters.

A **Song Thrush** was singing from a perch on the hedge at School Lane corner (10th) and one was singing at Church Farm (12th). Harbingers of Spring!

A **Siskin** was in Christine's garden on the 11th. A **Buzzard** was spotted over Waldringfield Heath and a **Goldcrest** together with 6 **Long-tailed Tits** was in the hedge from Chapel crossroads to New Oak Tree Fm (11th).

Sparrowhawks have been frequent visitor to gardens. Stan Baston photographed this beauty in his garden.



February 2018

Rooks were visiting their nest sites regularly from the beginning of the month, with about 70 birds wheeling around the Moon and Sixpence rookery.

A **Barn Owl** on the reserve was watched catching a small mammal and then flying to perch on one of the boundary oaks (9th, 17th and 21st).

3 **Canada Geese** made a brief visit to the reserve lagoon (11th).

A large flock of **Fieldfares** together with **Lapwings** and mixed finches were on the fields around White Hall (12th).

A **Stock Dove** as well as a **Pied Wagtail** were noted by Max and Margaret Pemberton in their garden on at least a couple of occasions in mid Feb.

A **Skylark** was singing above the fields along Sandy Lane (14th) and then quite regularly after that....except when it snowed!



A **Buzzard** was hunting over Church Field (23rd).

A **Great Northern Diver** was reported on the BINS website (24th).

A **Reed Bunting** was seen on the river wall (25th) and 3 Yellowhammers (27th).

Tawny Owls have been calling during the night and occasionally during daylight up to late Feb.

Who's been eating all the Skimmia berries?!

3 *Fieldfares enjoyed their meal in Stan Baston's garden in late February.*

March 2018

3 **Fieldfares** came to some apples thrown on the lawn, a **Song Thrush** appreciated food on a bird table, and a cock and 2 hen **House Sparrows** came to fat balls, all unusual species for our garden in Fishpond Rd (1st).

Fieldfares and **Mistle Thrushes** were on crab apples in Sullivan Place (2nd).

A **Coal Tit** with a white back has been coming to a garden feeder in Fishpond Rd throughout the winter period and it was here again on the 2nd. **Goldfinches** were noted in many gardens throughout this period. **Great, Blue, Coal and Long-tailed Tits** were feeding together in Celia Mason's garden in Hemley (3rd).

A **Snipe** flew up from the verge by Howe's Farm (3rd).

A **Woodcock** flew close to the junction of Sandy Lane and Fishpond Rd (5th).

After the coldest of the weather, corpses of a **Dabchick** and a **Widgeon** were close in to the river wall (7th), a **Shelduck** (13th) and a **Redshank** was on the verge along Sandy Lane (7th).

A **Marsh Harrier** has been seen over the saltmarsh and fields inland from the river and one flew quite close to the houses on the 7th.

A **Little Owl** has been seen frequently in the Newbourne to Hemley roads area and also in Mill Road.

Buzzards have been seen throughout the winter period, often it's their cry that's catches attention. On the 26th March one was watched catching a thermal over the village. It ascended slowly to a considerable height before drifting off in a north westerly direction, only to work its way back over the village a few minutes later. 4 Buzzards together were over the village on the 28th - young birds remaining in their parents' territory, or partial migrants either from further west that have spent the winter on the east coast, or birds moving north from a winter in the sun.



Curlews have been noted feeding on fields adjacent to the river. 20-30 birds are often in the flocks, but they are easily spooked by people passing by.

A **Yellowhammer** was calling from the reserve (9th) and from the hedgerow beyond Church Farm (16th).

A **Song Thrush** was singing loudly in Waldringfield Heath and was joined by a chorusing **Robin** and **Duncock** (10th).

A **Goldcrest** was watched as it worked its way along a yew hedge in Rose Cottage garden (11th).



*2 Bramblings came to Ros
Burfield's garden on the
18th / 19th March*



A **Fox** was watched in the fields to the west of Sandy Lane on the 16th Jan and a **Stoat** crossed Ipswich Rd by the golf course on the 29th Jan.

7 **Seals** were on the mud opposite Ramsholt Rocks 12th Dec 2017. A young Seal was resting on the WSC dinghy slipway on the 30th Jan and again on the 12th Feb. A maximum of 10 Seals, included young Seals, were counted opposite the Rocks on the 24th/25th March.

A **Harbour Porpoise** was seen in the river upstream of the Rocks on the 23rd Jan. Chris Morton noted its 'very fast transit through the water, including a complete ark above the water every few seconds.' 'The seals became interested in it, with one attempting to emulate the porpoise.'

A dead **Frog** was found on Woodbridge Rd on the 3rd Feb and a dead **Toad** along Mill Rd on the 10th March. **Frog spawn** was in Christine's pond on the 12th March.

7 **Hares** were seen on a field just along Woodbridge Rd on the 17th Feb and the same number were on a field adjacent to Sandy Lane on the 5th March.

Catkins were fully out in Sandy Lane 6th Jan.

Wild Plum was flowering near White Hall corner and at the Sandy Lane / Cliff Rd junction by the 12th March.

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