



‘What’s About’

No 46 Summer and Autumn 2017

When I sent out the last What’s About I urged readers to ‘Enjoy the arrival of spring migrants!’ Yes, it was that long ago. Well, the migrants arrived, stayed with us for four or five months and then departed for sunnier southern climes. More recently winter visitors have flown in from Iceland, Scandinavia and eastern Europe.

Before describing the birds of the autumn influx think back to those special birds of spring that we are lucky enough to still hear. First heard towards the river on the 13th April, and then on the 18th below Rudds Barn, the **Cuckoo** didn’t get into its ‘cuckoo-ing’ stride until the week beginning the 23rd April when it was then heard every day until mid-May along the riverside thickets and hedgerows, and inland areas such as the golf course and west of the village and then less frequently. Reported up to the 24th May, then not again until finally on the 17th and 19th June.

Swallows arrived on the 9th, 11th, 12th and 17th April and thereafter were seen and heard in most of their usual nesting areas of the village. We knew that Spring had arrived properly when on the 15th April the **Nightingale** was heard, **Brown Hares** were seen chasing one another and the first **Orange-tip** butterfly was recorded.

Orange –tip male



2 **Wheatears**, moving through to nest sites in northern Britain, were on a field path by Chapel crossroads on the 22nd April.

A **Common Whitethroat** was singing from the road hedgerow near Whitehall entrance on the 24th April and it remained in this undisturbed habitat for the summer. Several of the hedgerows outside the village held Whitethroat pairs during the summer and it was particularly pleasing that there were a number of **Yellowhammer** pairs singing too.

On the river a **Whimbrel** was heard on the 25th and 27th April, a **Green Sandpiper** and a **Common Sandpiper** were on the reserve lagoon on the 25th April, and 2 **Grey Wagtails** were on the lagoon edge on the 27th April.

A **House Martin** pair was spotted on the 27th April and 2 **Swifts** were overhead on the 1st May.

In early May **Nightingales** could be heard at Manor Cottage (possibly 2 pairs), the reservoir, the woodland at the sharp bend in Mill Rd (adjacent to the cable work site) and the roadside thicket next to the Ipswich Rd model helicopter site. On the wetland reserve 6 **Mute Swans**, 2 **Shelduck**, 2 **Oystercatchers** 2 **Mallards** and several **Moorhens** took up residence. The **Moorhens** almost certainly nested there and the **Mallards** were joined by another pair and at least three broods were raised between them.

Towards the end of May juvenile birds were being seen in people's gardens. Home-owners who are lucky enough to have **House Sparrow** colonies were seeing youngsters, and young **Blackbirds**, **Goldfinches**, **Robins**, **Blue** and **Great Tits** were reported too.

*A fledgling
Great Tit in
Alexis' garden*

*Photo:
Alexis Smith*



An adult **Bullfinch** was in Christine's garden on the 25th May and again on the 3rd June. A **Turtle Dove** was calling on the edge of Newbourne Springs on the 7th June. On the 8th and 9th of June 12 **Swifts** and about 30 **Swallows** and **House Martins** were feeding low over the riverbank path and ditch at the woodland end of the reserve, and on the 13th June a party of screaming **Swifts** were around the houses in the quay area.

Shelduck will nest some distance away from water and on the 12th June a family of ducklings on their way to the river passed through the garden of Cross Farm Cottage. A **Spotted Flycatcher** was on the wires opposite Christine's house on the 13th June. It was seen again on the 23rd June and on the same day a **Spotted Flycatcher** was seen at Howe's Farm. The Waldringfield Heath bird was seen carrying food on the 4th July, indicating that young birds were in a nest.

A **Little Owl** was seen on the 16th June, and on a couple of other occasions at that time, in the oak and pine trees at the road end of Manor Cottage track. A **Little Owl** was seen quite regularly by several people in the trees towards the Woodbridge Rd T-junction. Sadly a dead **Little Owl** was found on the road in that area on the 2nd July, but a very much alive bird was seen in the area on the 8th July.

A male **Tufted Duck** made a brief visit to the reserve lagoon on the 19th May and a male and female were there on the 23rd and 27th June.

A fledgling **Coal Tit** and 8 **Long-tailed Tits** were seen in Waldringfield Heath on the 20th June, and on one of the fields there a **Red-legged Partridge** with at least 10 chicks were seen.

In mid-June **House Martins** tried to build their nest under the eaves of a village house but the exterior surface was unsuitable for the mud to adhere. On seeing this

the homeowner rushed to acquire six nestboxes and within a couple of days of them being sited five of the boxes had been taken over by the **House Martins**! During the season most of the pairs produced two broods and in at least two of the boxes three broods were produced.

On the 4th July a **Peregrine** was seen climbing high above the Sailing Club and then disappearing against the cloud and 2 were seen high over the saltings on the 4th Aug. **Swift** activity in early July in School Road might indicate breeding under the tiles of one of the houses.

A **Whimbrel** was calling on the river on the 8th July - probably a non-breeding bird that had already started to move south.

Sand Martins were feeding over the reserve lagoon and a **Bullfinch** pair were in the Manor Cottage woodland on the 12th July. The only other **Bullfinch** sighting was from Ros Burfield's garden in early November.

Green Woodpeckers have been scarce, their 'yaffle' has been rarely heard, but an adult with an immature bird was in Fishpond Rd on the 14th July and single birds have been seen occasionally in Sunnyside and Waldringfield Heath.

On the 17th July a **Turtle Dove** was calling from the woodland edge to the north of Fishpond Rd., from a nearby garden on the 11th Aug and from the Woodbridge Road end of the golf course on the 25th Aug.

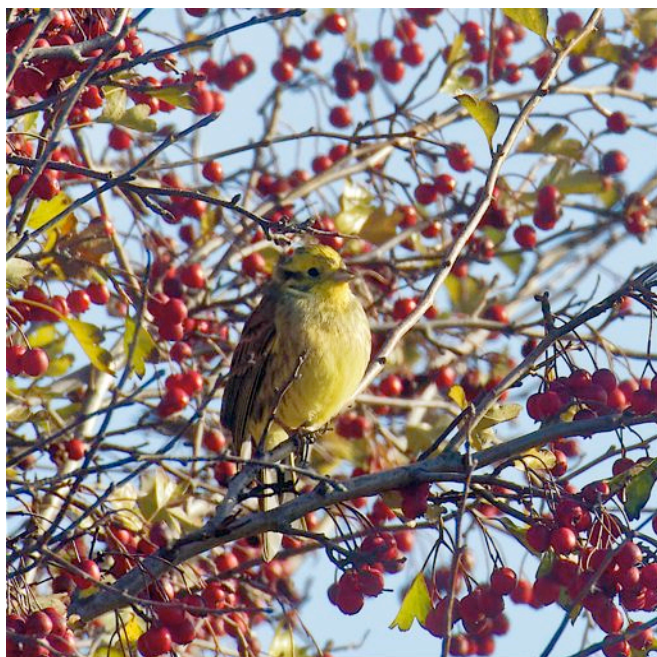
A **Green Sandpiper** was on the reserve lagoon on the 21st July and again on the 8th Aug.

A flotilla of 15 **Shelduck** ducklings was on the river towards Methersgate in late July, but the total number of young Shelduck on the river between Methersgate and The Rocks declines each year.

Barn Owls have been seen fairly regularly on the reserve, and one was seen to leave the line of oaks and fly directly across the river to Stonner Point on the evening of the 23rd July, probably intending to hunt on the Sutton side.

Linnets have nested in the gorse at the northern end of the reserve and 8 birds were seen on the 25th July. Hopefully the winter roost will return – prior to the disturbances 70+ Linnets dropped into the gorse each evening, but very few have been seen in recent winters.

Flocks of **Goldfinches**, however, have enjoyed the seed heads of the thistles that have grown along the river wall and a pair of **Yellowhammers** have been in residence in the bramble hedge at the Swans Nest sluice.



'Autumn Glory'

*A male Yellowhammer
photographed on the
17th November by
Chris Morton*

By the 7th Aug 70-80 **House Martins** gathered on the wires along Mill Road and both **House Martins** and **Swallows** used the boatyard jetty and nearby boats as gathering points before breaking out to take midges from over the water.

A **Kingfisher** was seen flying from the wetland reserve lagoon on the 19th Aug and 3 Kingfishers were using boats moored off the dinghy park as hunting perches on the morning of the 10th Sept.

A **Barn Owl** was watched as it successfully caught a small rodent on the reserve on the 23rd Aug and single Barn Owl sightings increased a little during September but 2 birds were seen hunting together on the 29th Sept.

It was noted that after a quiet summer on the river for water birds, about 25 **Black-tailed Godwits** had returned to the tideline at the northern end of the moorings by the 22nd Aug. A solitary **Grey Plover** in summer plumage was seen on the 24th Aug and on the same day a **Greenshank** was calling over the island.

In the last week of Aug a **Green Woodpecker** became a regular visitor on the lawn at Sally's house in Sunnyhill, and a muntjac was not an infrequent visitor to Sally's garden.

A **Green Sandpiper** was on the reserve lagoon on the 11th Sept and as well as the usual **Mallard**, a **Greenshank**, a **Widgeon**, 8 **Teal** indicated that some winter birds were beginning to return. By the 28th Sept there were about 30 duck on the reserve, half of these being **Mallard**. Three weeks later the number of **Widgeon** and **Teal** had risen to about 20 of each species, but by the end of October the number had reduced considerably: they had probably joined newly arrived wildfowl on the much quieter Sutton shoreline.

Kestrels must have nested in the area with them being seen throughout the summer along Mill Road, over the fields in Waldringfield Heath and over the fields below Sandy Lane. A dead **Kestrel** was found on the Ipswich road along the golf course bends on the 15th Oct. Whilst people have not been feeding small birds in their gardens



*Sparrowhawk with House Sparrow prey
on Stan Baston's lawn. Photo: Stan Baston*

Sparrowhawks have been observed with less frequency than in the winter, but nevertheless they have been recorded around the village and on the 20th Sept one was seen to take a **Wood Pigeon** off the lawn of one of the riverside houses.

Buzzards have been over the village regularly. Often a pair calling to one another alerts us to their presence before they are seen overhead.

Tawny Owls seem to do well around the village. They have been quite noisy, calling from several of the wooded and tree-lined areas. Occasional visits to gardens at dusk have surprised and delighted homeowners in Fishpond Road, Deben Lane and Sunnyhill.

5 **Brent Geese** flew over the village on the morning of the 6th Oct and about 60 were on the downstream saltmarsh later that day. By mid Oct about 20 were regularly feeding on the tideline alongside the upper moorings and as numbers grew the Stonner Point shoreline was favoured with 100+ **Brent Geese** feeding regularly there.

On the high tides when the saltmarsh is flooded, **Turnstones** and **Redshank** roost on the remains of the rusty hulk just upstream from Swans Nest. 25 were there on the 21st Oct.

At low tide on the 13th Nov in the bay between The Tips and The Hams 10 male **Pintail**, 100+ **Widgeon**, 80+ **Teal**, about 30 **Shelduck**, 8 **Grey Plover**, 1 **Golden Plover** (a flock of 90 were on the shore below the river wall walk at Kyson Pt earlier in the day), 8 **Little Grebes** and at least 200 **Dunlin** in flight were observed.

By mid-November a few fearless **Black-tailed Godwits** had returned to the waters edge near the boatyard and a few **Avocets** can be seen feeding on the mud just upstream of the houses. On the 15th Nov 3 **Avocets** were swimming just off the shore by the upper moorings. With the onset of colder weather more waders and duck are likely to return to our section of the river – Great Crested Grebes and Dabchicks will feed amongst the moorings and there ought to be Goldeneye and perhaps Red-breasted Mergansers on the open river.

Curlews have returned to feed in the stubble fields around the village and it was good to see 26 **Lapwings** feeding on a field near Thatched Farm on the 22nd Oct. **Redwings** and **Fieldfares** were seen in small numbers around the village in mid-Oct and migrant **Blackbirds**, both noisy and wary, have been devouring the last of the windfall apples in gardens.

A **Fallow Deer** was seen on the Reserve meadow on the 1st May and there have been several sightings between the village and Hemley. **Red Deer** are in the area and one was seen on the fields to the west of the wetland reserve on the 18th June.

Mary Tucker reported a **Hedgehog** in her garden on the 10th May. One was seen in Mill Road on about the 23rd June.

Pam Crawley watched a **Fox** in her garden on the 15th May

A **Stoat** was seen on the track from the crossroads to New Tree Farm on the 5th July.

Stoats were seen occasionally throughout the summer and one was seen chasing a rabbit across Fishpond Road near to the pond on the 20th Oct.

12th June 2 **Lizards** were seen on Church Field

In 6th Nov 5 **Common Seals** were seen on the mud opposite the Rocks.

Several stems of **Orobanche** were growing on the verge opposite the Baptist Chapel car park on the 10th June.

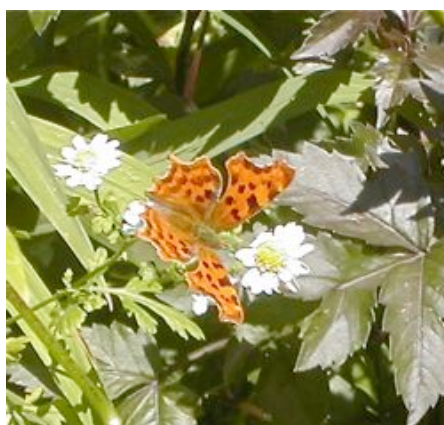
12th June **Bee orchids** were flowering on Church Field

Several **Fly Agaric** fungi were around the playing field Silver Birches at the beginning of Oct.

A male **Stag Beetle** was found crawling across Sandy Lane by the bridge on the 31st May and several more were seen, more often than not as road casualties, throughout June. The favoured areas being along Woodbridge Road and School Road hill.

Stag beetle caterpillars, 3ins long, unearthed when a stump was removed at Walk Farm.

Photo: Jackie Nayler



Comma - a butterfly that flies early in the year and throughout the summer into October.

Photo: Christine Fisher Kay

11th June A **Bumblebee** nest had been dug out by a **Badger** on the roadside just along Woodbridge Rd. and during the summer 3 other bumblebee and wasp nests were found to be dug out along the Woodbridge Rd

29th June and 28th July. A **Hummingbird Hawkmoth** was seen in Fishpond Road. During August a good number of **Yellow-legged Mining Bees** *Andrena flavipes* nested beside a path in Angela's garden. They are a harmless species but nevertheless their number was somewhat alarming for first-time visitors to the garden.

2 **White-letter Hairstreak** butterflies were recorded on elm - their caterpillar food plant - along Woodbridge Rd. This was the first sighting of the species in this area for a long time. Several **Goat Moth** caterpillars were also seen on Woodbridge Rd.

*An Elephant
Hawkmoth
caterpillar
found in a
Martlesham
garden near the
railway line.*

Alexis Smith



For this edition I am grateful to the following contributors: Chris Baldry, Ros Burfield, Joe and Kit Clark, Penny, Stephen and Charlie 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, Jackie Nayler, John Ogden, Max and Margaret Pemberton, Sally Redfern, Alexis and John Smith, Judith Stinson, Linda and Jon Wilkins, Neil Winship.

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