



‘What’s About’

No 48 Spring into Summer 2018

After the snow and monotonously dull weather of March it was good to find that by mid April the temperatures had occasionally risen to a day-time high of 15C and during a week in the second half of the month blue skies reigned. In May cool northerly winds set in, but even so temperatures reached 20C on half of the days in the month. Rain fell on very few days and since then, rain has fallen only on the 1st and 2nd of June. It is not yet clear how our wildlife has been affected by the drought but it must be making life difficult for many species. The birdbath in our garden is regularly filled and is regularly used as a bird and bee drinking pool and, (sigh) it would be nice if a hedgehog visited.

The majority of Swallows and House Martins were probably delayed by the cold and unfavourable winds, but the first Swallow was seen over the reserve on the 5th April, which was three days earlier than in 2017, and the second was seen on the 11th April and there were two at Hemley on the 20th April.

Two House Martins were over Sunnyhill on the 14th and there were several over the village on the 19th.

By the 26th April a pair of Swallows and 3 pairs of House Martins had established their nest sites around the Fishpond Rd and Sandy Lane corner.



House Martin

hopeful!

Photo Chris Morton

A Cuckoo was calling from along the riverside on the 14th April (13th April in 2017) and from the 20th was calling regularly from along the riverside vegetation and the golf course, and at Newbourne, Hemley and from the Sutton side of the river. The first Nightingale was heard at Manor Cottage on the 19th and on the 21st two were singing, one from below Manor Cottage and the other from the southern end of the woodland next to the reserve.

A Brambling was at a garden bird feeder on the 5th April and a female Blackcap was seen in a Mill Road garden. Chiffchaffs had been calling in March but now there were several calling around the village.

The Barn Owl that sat in the hole in the oak at the far side of the reserve attracted a number of photographers, who reported seeing three Barn Owls flying over the reserve on the 5th April.

On the 5th a Crow was watched as it repeatedly dropped a crab onto the sailing club slipway until the shell broke open.

A pair of Tufted Duck was on the reserve lagoon on the 6th April and were seen on and off through the summer. Breeding was not confirmed.

A Grey Wagtail was in a garden in Sullivan Place on the 6th April.

14 Siskins and a female Brambling visited a black sunflower feeder and a niger feeder in a garden on the 8th. They remained for much of the day but on the 9th April only one bird appeared in the early morning.

A Whimbrel was calling on the 18th April.

A dead Mute Swan was on the river mud on the 21st, DEFRA being informed.

Green Woodpeckers have occasionally visited garden lawns to feed – but less frequently than in the past.
Might there be fewer ants for them to feed upon?

Green Woodpecker
Photo Chris Morton



A Red Kite was seen by Sally at Bawdsey on the 21st, and on the 23rd a Red Kite flew up the Waldringfield cricket field valley and over Sunnyhill.

At high tide on the 30th April three Snipe took off from the water's edge below Manor Cottage.

Little Owls were reported from several locations at Hemley, the 'green lane' next to the golf course, the oaks along Ipswich Rd., from Woodbridge Rd and from Sandy Lane.

By the start of May Barn Owls became much less evident during the daylight hours, so presumably their prey of mice and voles was plentiful enough for them to hunt only at night.

There must be several pairs of Tawny Owls around the village and as the month progressed occasional daytime hoots could be heard both in Waldringfield and Waldringfield Heath.

Buzzards were heard calling, often before they were seen soaring over the village.

The Nightingales continued to sing through the first half of May, but then like other species got down to the serious business of nesting. Apart from 'chacking' Magpies and ever-present courting Wood Pigeons the garden became fairly quiet. Blackbirds skulked under bushes and the small flocks of Goldfinches that had liked to sing from the higher branches of birch trees were much less evident.

Swifts always arrive in May, but although 3 were over the village on the 8th May, it was not until the 27th May that Swifts reappeared when 4 were sighted. Throughout June small numbers of Swifts were often over the village and it is likely that a pair might have nested in the lower part of Cliff Rd and perhaps in Fishpond Rd too.



Shelduck mother with her ducklings on the river Photo Alexis Smith

By the 21st May there were 2 broods of Mallards on the reserve lagoon. A Mallard with her ducklings had been seen in a garden at the top of the track to Manor Cottage – hopefully they negotiated the highs and lows of the potato field to reach the fresh water of the reserve.

On 30th May Janette reported that late arrival House Martins had returned to rebuild their nest on her house. On the same day a Whimbrel, an early Autumn migrant, probably a non-breeding bird was heard calling on the river – the seasons merge! On the 5th June 'the Oystercatcher' had returned to nest on the top of the post in front of Debenair. Successful?unlikely!

A pair of Bullfinches were watched as they fed on seed heads in a garden on the 7th June. They were sighted on several more occasions during June.

A distant view of the heronry at The Tips on the 12th June showed 9 Herons in the treetops, but through binoculars it was not possible to assess the adult/juvenile ratio.

On the 14th June a Red Kite was watched over Sunnyhill. (See 23rd April)

The last record of a Cuckoo calling was on the 15th June.

A Yellow Wagtail was on the bare earth alongside the potato field by Manor Cottage track on the 16th June.

A small herd of about six Fallow Deer have been seen several times on the fields between Waldringfield Heath through to Hemley.

A Weasel was watched hunting around flower pots on the patio of a garden in Fishpond Rd on the 12th April, and on the 13th April it repeated its antics before climbing a trellis so that it could enjoy a quick meal at a peanut bird feeder.

On the 11th May hedgehogs were heard snuffling in the undergrowth in Mill Rd and it wasn't long before a trail camera identified 3 hedgehogs visiting a garden there.

See the email for the link to a video of the hedgehogs.

Frogspawn hatching in Christine's garden pond on the 5th April and by the 19th there were 'plenty' of tadpoles in her pond.



Swallow-tailed Moth
found in the Village Hall

Photo Alyson Videlo

Orange-tip butterflies, Holly Blues, Commas, the white butterflies, Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells and Brimstones were all reported by the start of May and they seemed to benefit from the sunny weather of May and June, although as nectar sources and some larval food plants have started to wither, confidence in the development of the next generation does become less certain. Although Red Admirals, Painted Ladies and Commas have been in short supply, garden nectar sources such as lavender, sedum, marjoram, Bowles Mauve perennial

wallflower and Buddleja that flower in July and August will attract the butterflies to gardens. The Purple Hairstreak, a small butterfly that often goes unnoticed, can be found throughout July. Its habitat is oak, where on fairly still, sunny days it can be seen darting around the canopy and in pairs spiralling above the trees. It is in the oaks around the Maybush carpark and will be in other oaks around the village. Prepare for a stiff neck! You'll have to be patient when you look for this small, silvery, darting butterfly.

The first Stag Beetle to be found was a road casualty on the 29th May. A few more were found in places where tree stumps have been left to rot – roots of dead elms, often found along roadsides, are used as a food source for the larva of this spectacular beetle. The beetles are attracted to the warmth of tarmac surfaces so become vulnerable to vehicle tyres. The removal of hedgerow tree stumps as part of the countryside 'tidying up' process destroys habitat and also, the increase in the number of Magpies and Crows is likely to be making an impact on Stag Beetle populations too.

A fissure on an oak along Woodbridge Road was issuing sap and on the 3rd June six Hornets were watched as they imbibed.

At the beginning of June 13 Bee Orchids were counted on Church Field, a slightly lower number than was present in 2017.

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