

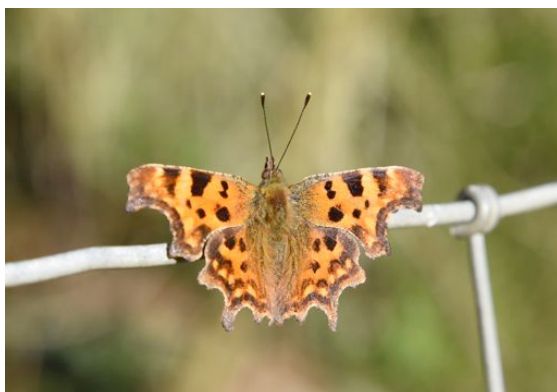


‘What’s About’

No 50
Winter 2018-19

Hares have been seen throughout the winter on fields around the village. ‘Mad March hares’ chasing one another in their courtship routines will soon be witnessed. Leverets are born usually between February and September, often in the open, then moved a few metres to shallow depressions or ‘forms’ where the female feeds them once a day. Hares are usually solitary but occasionally they will group together. 13 Hares were gathered on one field in early February.

Illustration of a Brown Hare by school student Isobelle Ellingham.



Comma soaking up the rays, 25th February

The winter has been fairly benign: windscreens hardly froze over during November and December, and only towards the end of January did we experience a light covering of snow. February was remarkable for the fortnight of light winds, sunshine and daytime temperatures in the teens. Wildlife responded with birds carrying nesting material, although I haven't heard of eggs being laid, and bees and butterflies were observed.

On 22nd Nov 13 **Magpies** were feeding on the manure heap 200m along Woodbridge Rd., and there were at least 16 Magpies there on the 16th Dec.

In the late afternoon of the 10th Dec 2 **Barn Owls** emerged from their tree hole on the reserve and, watched by Serena, one caught a small mammal - possibly a vole – flew to a nearby branch and ate it. At the same time a **Little Egret** fishing in the lagoon was seen to catch 3 small fish.

A Barn Owl was seen hunting over the fields bordering the Manor Cottage track on the 12th Dec. One flew over Mill Rd from Church Field on the 7th Jan. A Barn Owl was seen in its tree hole on the reserve on the 7th Jan and on several days through that month and Feb. A Barn Owl was seen hunting on the field inland of White Hall on the 30th Jan and one was by Waldringfield Church on the 31st Jan.

Tawny Owls have been calling throughout the winter months. A good place to listen out for them is around the Cricket Field and Fishpond area, but they have been heard in the area of the school and Church Farm too.

On the 22nd Nov 180 **Brent Geese** were on the field below Sandy Lane, 200 were there on the 26th and 400 on the 27th, with 447 counted on the 28th, after which they found new feeding grounds elsewhere along the Deben or one of the neighbouring rivers.

100 **Widgeon** and 50 **Teal** were on the reserve lagoon on the 26th Nov.

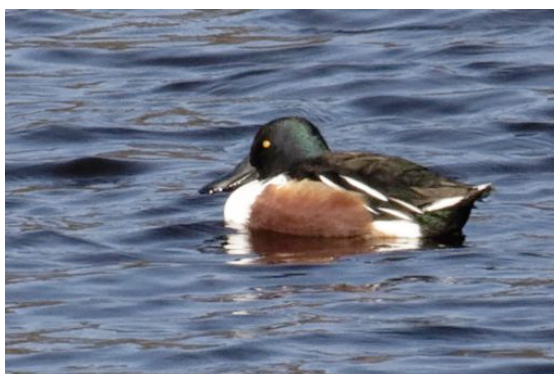
Lapwing roost on the island off the Sailing Club and about 70 settled there on the 12th Dec.

2 male **Shoveler** duck were on the reserve lagoon on the 13th Dec.

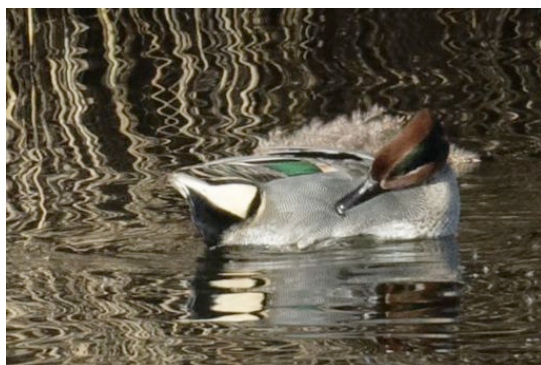
On the 19th Dec a low tide scan of the water birds from Methersgate quay to the northern end of the island produced a total of 267

Shelduck, 38 male **Pintail**, 350+ **Dunlin**, 2 adult male **Goldeneye**, **Widgeon**, **Teal**, 1 **Marsh Harrier**, only 2 **Little Grebe**, but no **Avocet**.

Duck enjoy the freshwater gully in the bay between the Tips and the Hams, but this winter Widgeon and



Male Shoveler photo: Stan Baston



Male Teal photo: Stan Baston

Teal in particular have been congregating on the reserve lagoon. On the 4th Jan 80 Widgeon, 50 Teal and 6 male Shoveler were counted. A Marsh Harrier was seen below White House at Hemley on the 15th Jan and on the same day a **Kestrel** was hunting near to Plum Tree Cottage. There have been very few sightings of Marsh Harriers over the saltmarsh and

river to the north of the village during the winter period. Spring migration will soon be under way - look out for

Osprey as one is sometimes seen at this time of year in the Methersgate stretch.

An unusually high number of 125 **Avocets** were seen feeding along the tideline adjacent to the reserve on the 20th Jan.

20 **Fieldfares** were on windfall apples in a garden in Fishpond Rd on 26th Nov
A flock of 20+ **Goldfinches** were feeding in birch trees along Fishpond Rd on 27th Nov.

A **Kingfisher** was observed on the sluice railings at the reserve on the 9th Dec and one was seen flying over the water by the beach on the 24th Jan.

A **Coal Tit** with a white back has been coming to the feeder in our garden for much of Jan and through into March.

A **Great Spotted Woodpecker** came to fat balls on the 7th Jan, but one was seen visiting feeders quite regularly in the Quay / Deben Lane area in Jan and Feb.

A good number of **Goldfinches** have been coming to feeders in Sunnyhill and a male **Blackcap** visited Pam Crawley's feeder on the 20th Jan.

Rooks were visiting their nest sites at the fishpond on the 23rd Jan.

A thin skein of ice covered the reserve lagoon on the morning of the 25th Jan so no ducks were present. The **Barn Owl** in its tree hole looked on.

A **Song Thrush** was singing its heart out on the sunny morning of the 28th Jan and a

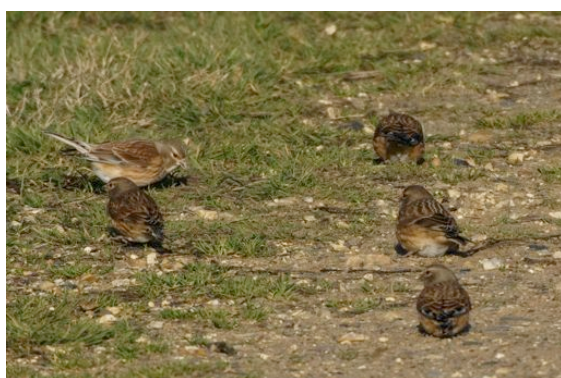
Green Woodpecker was calling from the Cricket Field area too.

3 **Goldeneye** were at the northern end of the moorings in the late afternoon of the 30th Jan, but no **Linnets** were coming to roost in the gorse at the northern end of the



The male Great Spotted Woodpecker has red on its head and under the tail.

Photo: Alexis Smith



A few Linnets feeding on the river wall path by the reserve. Photo: Chris Morton

reserve. We seem to have lost that winter overnight roost which a few years ago held 70 – 100 birds. To end the year, on the 31st Jan a count of **Shelduck** between Methersgate and the Island totalled 224. **Avocet** 44 on the Waldringfield shore and 20 on the Sutton tideline. **Little Grebe** 15, **Pintail** male 10 and about 300 **Dunlin**. A flock of 8+

Yellowhammers were feeding on the stubble alongside the Manor Cottage

track on the 31st Jan.

A **Skylark** was singing near Plum Tree Cottage on the 4th Feb and 2 were singing in the same area on the 5th Feb. On the 5th a **Song Thrush** in Deben Lane beckoned Spring with its song.

4 **Buzzards** wheeled overhead on the 11th and then were seen and heard on several days through mid-February.

4 pairs of **Shoveler** and 2 single males were observed on the reserve lagoon on the 11th Feb. On the 13th Feb about 150 **Widgeon** and **Teal** rose up off the lagoon, many

coming from the hidden area behind the islands and from the reeds. The lagoon has held more duck than in previous years. Here there is shelter from strong winds and no doubt they've learnt that they won't get shot, although predators do visit.



'What's for dinner tonight – Brent Geese or Teal?'
Foxes on the edge of the reserve. Photo Chris Baldry

The 18th Feb was one of those spring-like mornings with a **Barn Owl** hunting over the old set-aside above the pit at Newbourne, **Song Thrushes** were singing in School Lane and several **Skylarks** were singing over the stubble and cornfields.

A **Green Woodpecker** was calling near the Cricket Field on the 19th Feb. A **Yellowhammer** was seen along Manor Cottage track on the 20th Feb. Several **Moorhen** were reported to be on the reserve lagoon on the 21st Feb. As the warm weather continued, loud early morning birdsong from **Wren**, **Robin**, **Blackbird** and **Song Thrush** were noted in Waldringfield Heath on the 21st and on the 23rd Feb a **Goldcrest** came to Christine's pond.

A flock of 14 **Yellowhammers** were on Church Field on the 25th Feb.

40-50 **Fieldfare** were on the stubble between Holly Corner and White Hall on 1st March and again on the 4th and 6th. No Fieldfares were seen on the 8th but 6 were there whilst the field was being cultivated for potatoes on the 11th March.

8 **Moorhens** were on the field edge of the reserve's western boundary on the 8th March. A **Siskin** came to a feeder in Pam's garden on the 9th March.

By mid Feb **Brent Geese** numbers in the area had lowered, with about 100 continuing to roost around the island and by early March the number of duck in the Methergate area and on the reserve lagoon had reduced. On the 8th March 40 **Teal**, 25 **Widgeon**, 2 **Mallard** and 1 male **Shoveler** remained on the lagoon. During the strong wind of the 12th and 13th March about 70 **Widgeon** and 40 **Teal** were sheltering on the lagoon. There were very few birds on the mud near the Tips.

A **Bat** was flying along Mill Rd in the early morning of the 6th Dec and 1 flew in Fishpond Rd on the 21st Dec.

A **Stoat** spent a few minutes investigating the flowerpots and troughs on our patio on the 10th and again on the 11th and 16th Dec. On the 6th Jan it was seen again in the garden and on this occasion it climbed up through a shrub in an attempt to inspect a bird nest box.

A road casualty **Badger** was found on Mill Rd beyond White Hall on the 21st Dec and another was found by Howe's Farm entrance on the 28th Feb.

A herd of about 7 **Fallow Deer** have been seen by several people. They have been observed crossing Ipswich Rd from the golf course to land near Chapel crossroads and then on the fields towards Newbourne and Hemley. Fallow are much larger than Muntjac and these deer are of the dark local form. They appear to be does, but if a buck is seen it will have palmate horns. Let me know if the antlers are branched and multi pointed – Red Deer.

4 **Common Seals** were hauled out on the mud at Hemley on the 26th Jan.

In the sunshine a **Honey Bee** was visiting the flowers of a witch hazel on the 15th Feb. Several **Honey Bees** and **Bumblebees** were flying at that time. A **Red Admiral** was recorded on the 19th. A **Brimstone** flew through Sunnyhill on the 22nd, a **Peacock** butterfly was seen at Christine's house on the 23rd Feb and a **Brimstone** was there on the 25th Feb.

Early wild plum blossom was fully out by the 26th Feb.

Frogspawn was seen in Christine's pond on the 28th Feb, not especially early as in previous years it has usually appeared in the first few days of March.



A **Grass Snake** was uncovered during a garden tidy-up during February. They are becoming a threatened species. Take care around compost heaps where they may hibernate.

Note the distinctive white markings at the back of the head.

The **Adder** is found in very low numbers on some heathland-type habitats in the Sandlings.

Note the zig-zag pattern along the back and no white markings around the head.



For this edition I am grateful to the following contributors: Chris Baldry, Rolls Barclay, Stan Baston, Joe and Kit Clark, Pam Crawley, Sam and Isobelle Ellingham, Janet Elliott, Serena Gold, Christine Fisher Kay, Chris and Tony Lyon, Anne Maddison, Anthony and Celia Mason, Chris Morton, John Ogden, Sally Redfern, Alexis and John Smith, Linda and Jon Wilkins, Neil Winship, Jill Winter.

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