

Birds and Butterflies seen in the woods in October & November 2015

Red Kites and Sparrowhawks have been recorded regularly, as have Common Buzzards (3 were seen together on the 16th October). Woodpigeons are indeed common – though nationally their numbers are dropping considerably; Stock Doves, their smaller relatives, are also frequent; these hole-nesting birds breed in the wood and two juveniles were observed in early October. Green and Great-spotted Woodpeckers are often heard (and less often seen), and there was a curiously incomplete record of corvids – Magpies, Jays, Jackdaws and Carrion crows – but nobody recorded a Rook! The rookery itself has virtually disappeared and the birds seem to have removed themselves to a site fairly near the sewage treatment works by the canal (I hope they come back – I love their noisy communications!). The diminutive Goldcrest has been recorded on several occasions – listen out for its high “cicely, cicely, cicely” call especially from the larches. Blue and Great Tits are common, and there have been several flocks of Long-tailed Tits, constantly calling to each other at this time of year as they move through the woods together. Nuthatch and Wren are also often heard rather than seen. Blackbirds are common and now is the time to look out for the winter thrushes – Redwings and Fieldfares, and also Mistle Thrushes (which may be residents or migrants). One Mistle Thrush was seen eating berries in early October, and a handful of Redwings have been found. Then we have the regular species: Robin (both male and female may trill away in the late autumn), Dunnock, House Sparrow, Goldfinch, Chaffinch and Bullfinch.

A number of Speckled Wood butterflies were seen in the first week of October.

Birds and Butterflies seen in the woods in September 2015

A quiet month – perhaps fewer species in smaller numbers – or perhaps fewer people are sending in records of their sightings! Some really common birds are missing from the list; what happened to the Dunnocks, the Coal Tits and the Goldfinches? It really is important for all wildlife sites to keep records of what is around - partly as insurance against future developments or encroachment.

Anyway, this is what was recorded: Sparrowhawk; Buzzard (2 on the 27th); Stock Dove and Woodpigeon; Green Woodpeckers and great-spotted Woodpeckers. All the common members of the corvid (crow) family: magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. Blue Tits and Great Tit, and plenty of the distantly related Long-tailed Tits. Nuthatch; Wren; Blackbird; House Sparrow, and finally just two species of finch – Chaffinch and Bullfinch. Hundreds of Redwings, winter thrushes coming from Scandinavia and Russia, are now being recorded at visible migration points – keep looking out for them and listening to their high pitched “seep” sounds, often heard at night.

The only butterflies recorded this month were Speckled Woods – they are still about – and the only mammals recorded were Grey Squirrel and Rabbit.

Birds and Butterflies seen in the woods in July & August 2015

A Red Kite and occasional Buzzards were seen circling over the wood. Sparrowhawks were seen frequently, and their young were heard on several occasions making their plaintive begging calls. The occasional Black-headed Gull flew over on its way to fields or the canal, and Woodpigeons, Stock several species of butterfly have been noted: Small Skipper, Essex Skipper, Large Skipper, Large White, Small White and Green-veined White, Common Blue, Speckled Wood, Marbled White (a huge number of these on some sunny days in early July), Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown and Ringlet. (No Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells or Commas?) Many butterflies will still be around for another couple of months so Doves and Collared Doves were also regularly spotted.

The last Swifts were recorded in late July – we now have to wait till next spring before these scimitar-winged screamers reappear. Both Green and Great-spotted Woodpeckers were seen and heard, the latter breeding in the old wood. All the regular corvids were present: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow.

Blue, Great and Coal Tits were around, and a group of 18 Long-tailed Tits, adults and young, was along the main ride in early July. A few species of warbler were recorded: Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Whitethroat. The first two species are increasingly staying to overwinter, so do listen out for them. Noisy Nuthatches and Wrens frequent, as were Blackbird, Song Thrush, Robin and Dunnock. House Sparrows are often seen near to human habitation, and finally three finch species were also seen: Chaffinch, Greenfinch and Bullfinch.

We may feel that there hasn't been a great deal of sunshine this summer, but several species of butterfly have been noted: Small Skipper, Essex Skipper, Large Skipper, Large White, Small White and Green-veined White, Common Blue, Speckled Wood, Marbled White (a huge number of these on some sunny days in early July), Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown and Ringlet. (No Peacocks, Small Tortoiseshells or Commas?) Many butterflies will still be around for another couple of months so do keep looking out!

Birds and other wildlife seen in the woods in May & June 2015

The two months have been put together this time, partly because there were very similar records from both months, but mainly because I got behind with co-ordinating and compiling the lists – and suddenly it's July!

Birds: Three Mallards flew across the woods. Buzzards were seen fairly frequently as were Stock Dove and their more obvious cousins, Woodpigeons. Both Green and Great-spotted Woodpeckers were seen, the latter at its nest in early June. Young woodpeckers are very noisy! The usual crow family members were much in evidence: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow – though many of "our" Rooks have deserted the site for another copse close to the Globe pub. Blue Tits were spotted feeding their

family at nest box no. 4 in late May. Great Tits will also have bred. Skylarks sang from adjoining fields, and three warblers were heard: Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Garden Warbler. Another species to be observed with young was Nuthatch, a real woodland specialist that often cakes its nest hole with mud to make it exactly the right size. Wrens and Starlings were seen, as were many Blackbirds. Song Thrushes are still delighting the listener with their twice-told melodies, while Robins and Dunnocks continue to trill. House Sparrows were heard in the usual areas near human habitation, and three finch species were recorded: Chaffinch, Greenfinch and the melancholy Bullfinch.

Butterflies: The year seems to have got off to a slow start, but we have now had the following species recorded: Large Skipper, Large White, Peacock, Speckled Wood and the beautiful Marbled White, whose underside is as attractive as the upper surface of the wings.

Mammals: Grey Squirrels and Rabbits, of course together with Moles – usually known from their hills rather than their presence. Similarly, although Red Foxes are occasionally seen, their scent and dropping are more familiar. Two species of deer have been recorded: Muntjac, and Roe. Roe is one of the only two truly native species (the other is Red Deer, rather unlikely in our woods!). Roe are now being seen more frequently but they are rare in this area and any records are sent to the County Mammal recorder. They bark, more deeply than do Muntjac, and their really noticeable feature is the white rump – usually seen disappearing!

Birds and other wildlife seen in the woods in April 2015

We don't get Canada geese spotted over the Woods all that often, but two flew over this month! A Red Kite also flew over, and Buzzards were seen on several occasions. Nobody recorded Stock Dove, but the more obvious Woodpigeons were seen and heard on every visit! Some lesser Black-backed Gulls flew over perhaps on their way to or from Grovebury. Both the common woodpeckers – Green and Great-spotted – were encountered as were the usual corvids: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow and Rook. The rookery is down to two nests with a third being investigated (though it is now late in the season). Blue, Great and Long-tailed Tits were plentiful; no Coal Tit? Keep an eye out in the larches or other coniferous trees.

Skylarks sang beautifully in nearby fields, and there was also some cheerful singing from Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs. It's interesting how much bird-watching is actually bird listening – we tend to pick birds up by their sound before we actually see them (a good reason to familiarise ourselves with the calls and songs of the more common species). Listen out for the schoolboy whistle and other “unmusical” calls of Nuthatches. Wrens have a loud song quite disproportionate to their size, and their alarm calls – a loud “Tek, tek” are also quite explosive. Other species recorded were Starling, Blackbird, Song and Mistle Thrush, Robin and Dunnock. House Sparrows chirped from near the houses. Four finch species were also recorded: Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch and Bullfinch.

Birds and other wildlife seen in the woods in March 2015

A Buzzard was spotted being harried by 2 Rooks on the 25th - no other birds of prey were recorded this month. The usual Woodpigeons and Stock Doves were seen as were both of the common woodpeckers - Green and Great-Spotted. All the common corvids were recorded - magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook (down, it seems, to only two active nests) and Carrion Crow. On the 25th seven Blue Tits and 13 Great Tits were recorded on a BirdTrack survey (do get in touch if you want to know more about BirdTracking!). Coal Tits and Long-tailed Tits were also observed. The first Chiffchaff recorded was on the 18th, and there have been several sightings (or perhaps "hearings" since then). Nuthatch, Wren and Starling were observed, but the only member of the thrush family was the Blackbird! Robins, Dunnocks and House Sparrows were seen and heard as were three members of the finch family - Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Bullfinch.

Mammal sightings: Grey Squirrel, Muntjac, and some fresh looking Badger activity.

Butterflies are beginning to be seen: so far only Brimstone and Comma have been recorded – but there are more out there!

Birds and other wildlife seen in the woods in February 2015

Two raptors recorded this month – a Sparrowhawk that caused some agitation to a flock of Redwings on the 6th, and a Buzzard. Stock Dove and Woodpigeon were both recorded but no Collared Doves. Great Spotted Woodpecker seen, but no Green Woodpecker – we need more recorders out there! All the common corvids were noted: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook (but no obvious breeding activity yet), and Carrion Crow, one of which was seen having a bathe in a puddle. All the common tits were also recorded – Blue, Great and Coal, as well as Long-tailed Tits, and a diminutive Goldcrest was spotted in the Larches. Treecreeper, Nuthatch and Wren were seen. Blackbirds were plentiful and small flocks of Redwing were recorded. Song Thrush and Mistle Thrush were both heard singing. The usual small suspects were around: Robin, Dunnock, House Sparrow, as well as four species of finch: Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch and Bullfinch.

As March progresses we may start to see the departure of some of the winter visitors and the arrival of a few early migrants – it's an exciting month.

Birds and other wildlife seen in the woods in January 2015

Two birds of prey on our list this month: Red Kite and Buzzard. One gull species was recorded: the familiar Black-headed Gull, which is gradually developing its dark head ready for the breeding season. Stock Dove, Woodpigeon and Collared Dove were all recorded as were the two common woodpeckers – Green and Great Spotted. All the common corvids were also seen and heard: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow and Rook, though so far the Rooks don't seem to be using their last season's nests. This is a little worrying as they normally start to nest early; have they deserted us and moved away to near Old Linslade Church area? Blue and Great Tits are seen on all visits and Long-tailed Tit flocks are also fairly well recorded. Nuthatches

are calling loudly now. Wren was often heard though less often seen! Blackbird is common, and it was pleasing to hear a Mistle Thrush singing its far carrying, slightly desolate song on the 30th. Robin, Dunnock and House Sparrow are fairly vocal, and three of the usual finches were also recorded: Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Bullfinch.

Thanks to all those who sent in records directly or via our yahoo group.