

Birds and other wildlife Recorded in December 2017

A fairly quiet month. Red Kites were seen fairly frequently, as they are (virtually daily) over the housing estate nearby. Occasional Black-headed Gulls flew over. Woodpigeons were regulars, and both common woodpeckers (Green and Great-spotted) were seen. The usual small Passerines were around, often heard and not so often seen – Dunnock, Robin and Wren. And Starlings were also about in small numbers. This month saw the first records of the winter thrushes in the woods: Five Redwings on the 12th, and Fieldfares shortly after Christmas. Goldcrests, our smallest birds, were seen in the Larches, and various tits were recorded – Great Tit, Blue Tit and distant cousin Long-tailed Tits. Nuthatches were heard, and the usual members of the crow family were seen and heard: magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow and Rook. There seemed to be several Rooks pairing up by the middle of the month – they are early breeders. But there is usually controversy with the jackdaws over the use of last year's nests! Finally, we saw three finches – Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Bullfinch. Look out for Siskins and Redpolls – they are using the feeders in nearby gardens!

Mammals noted: The scent of Red Fox; Grey Squirrels; fresh Molehills! It's easier to see birds than mammals....

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Birds of prey this month were Sparrowhawk and Red Kite, the latter seen now almost daily over the nearby houses. Black-headed Gulls were seen flying overhead. Woodpigeons were commonly seen. Both of the usual woodpeckers – Green and Great-Spotted – were also about. Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird and Robin were seen on most visits, and one observer was fortunate enough to see a Goldcrest; they aren't rare, but they are tiny, have a very high call, and are often high up in the larches or other conifers. Great Tits and Blue Tits were seen and heard frequently, and little parties of Long-tailed Tits flitted through.

Listen out for the Nuthatches, often calling quite loudly. All the usual corvids were about: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. Finally, three species of finch: Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Bullfinch.

Look out for the winter thrushes in the coming months!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in October 2017

The only wildlife record sent in apart from bird news was a lone Grey Squirrel! We must all get out more... Red Kites and Buzzards were seen on most visits. Surely no visit can pass without Woodpigeons; Collared Dove was also recorded but no Stock Dove this month- they are often overlooked (or thought to be Woodpigeons). Both common woodpeckers were seen – Green and Great-spotted. Robin, Blackbird and Wren were seen (or heard) on most walks, as were Blue Tit, Great Tit and calling flocks of Long-tailed Tit. Nuthatch was also observed. All the common corvids were around: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. I wonder what the rookery will be like in the spring next year? It varies annually but generally the nest numbers are declining considerably. Finally, three species of finch: Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Bullfinch.

Birds to look out for in the winter months – Fieldfares, Redwings, more Mistle Thrushes, Brambling (the northern cousin of Chaffinches), Siskins, and some of those sturdy Hawfinches that have made a massive influx into Britain this year.

The records of wildlife are so important – especially when we are faced with developers who would just love to build right up to the edge of the wood. Noise and urban light levels are extremely disruptive to birds, bats and other wildlife, so if we can show that the area is currently rich in wildlife, we can help put the case against the encroaching development. SO please look out as you walk round the woods and record what you see and hear!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in September 2017

A quiet month – the end of summer and the migration season not yet underway. Woodpigeon and Stock Dove: the latter is often overlooked or thought to be the former! Look out for the Green Woodpecker, often

seen foraging for ants on the grass, or flying away showing its yellow rump. Robins and Wrens were seen on all visits, as were Great Tits, Blue Tits and Long-tailed Tits, often now in small parties. Listen out for those Nuthatches, frequently whistling or calling – or you may spot them making their way down a tree trunk, head first. All the common corvids were seen: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow.

Please keep those records coming in – we need more information on what you have seen and heard! You may see something that you think is very common – but that doesn't mean that someone else has recorded it. Now it's October – look out for the early arrival of winter thrushes – Redwings and Fieldfares. Many species move in a south westerly direction at this time of year, including those that we tend to think of as "our" residents, such as Woodpigeons.

Birds and other wildlife recorded in July and August 201

High summer is a quiet time for most birds; the breeding season is, more or less over, and many are in a state of moult, which reduces their ability to escape with speed from predators, and so they are shy and quieter. No need now to advertise their territories with song, though alarm calls to and from youngsters are still common. Red Kites and Buzzards have been seen over the trees, and juvenile Sparrowhawks have made their slightly plaintive calls. Tawny owl calls have also been heard, often in the very early morning. Black-headed Gulls flew over. Swifts, migrants from Africa, are now virtually all departed; we shan't hear those screaming parties again till late spring. Woodpigeons and Stock doves were encountered on most visits, as were the two common woodpeckers: Green and Great-spotted. Of the smaller residents there were Dunnocks, Robins and Wrens seen or heard on most visits to the woods. Blackbirds were also common – but not a single Song Thrush was reported during these two months! Great Tits and Blue Tits and their very distant relatives, Long-tailed Tits were regulars. They are now beginning to get into small flocks – no longer in breeding pairs. Some of the warblers may well remain for some time yet, or possibly even overwinter here – an increasingly likely occurrence. In July and August there were plenty of Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps and a few Willow Warblers and one Garden Warbler recorded. Listen out for the whistling and bubbling Nuthatches, and of course all the common corvids were encountered: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. Finally, House Sparrows were found near the urban fringe – but of the finches only the Bullfinch was recorded. Look out now for small flocks or "charms" of Goldfinches, often with juveniles who lack the red mark on their heads.

Squirrels and occasional Rabbits were noted and a dead Common Shrew was found on a path in early July. There are still plenty of butterflies around when the sun comes out; look out for the occasional Peacock – hardly any have been recorded this season, not just in Linslade, but throughout Bedfordshire.

Birds and other wildlife recorded in June 2017

June is not usually a month for surprises in the birdwatching world – spring migration is well over and many species are still concentrating on their young. Nonetheless a good number of different species were recorded in the woods - and if more people sent in their records there would be more species to write about! Red Kites and Buzzards are regularly seen - the former are often circling over the nearby housing estate. Woodpigeon and Stock Dove were seen frequently, and so were Green and Great-spotted Woodpeckers. Dunnocks are very plentiful, though often missed as they tend to skulk close to the ground like mice. Robins, Blackbirds and Song Thrushes were often encountered as were Blue and Great Tits (no Coal Tits recorded this month). A few small parties of Long-tailed Tits were recorded. Some of the summer warblers were seen and heard: Chiffchaff (unmistakeable!), Blackcap and Willow Warbler. Nuthatches are frequently calling, and all the expected corvids were around: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. House sparrows chattered in trees and hedges near human habitation, and three common finches were recorded: Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Bullfinch.

Now is a very good time to be looking out for the butterflies of high summer. Many were seen in June including Large Skipper, Ringlets (lots of these!), Meadow Brown (lots of these too), Red Admiral, Comma, Speckled Wood and the beautiful Marbled White.

As I write this (early July), the show of orchids in the woods has finished, but on just one day in June eleven Bee Orchids were counted, and literally hundreds

Birds and other wildlife recorded in May 2017

Hérons, probably on their way to the canal. Only two different birds of prey recorded this month: Red Kite and Buzzard. One Red Kite was seen being chased by an angry and very noisy Rook. Woodpigeon and Stock Dove were seen but no Collared Doves. Both common woodpeckers – Green and Great-spotted were around. Swifts have been seen on a couple of occasions flying over the wood – they will nest in urban areas so do listen out for “screaming parties” around town and the housing estates. There is a Swift project being carried out in Bedfordshire, so please note any that you see going into buildings. The following common birds were seen (or heard) on most visits: Robin, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Wren, Great Tit, Blue Tit and Long-tailed Tits. Swallows were also observed flying over the woodland and in a nearby road. There are plenty of those summer visitors to be seen, like the Warbler, Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Willow Warbler (surely the most delicate and enchanting singer of all!), and Common Whitethroat.

Nuthatches are nesting in tree holes. The common corvids are also noisily about: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow; most of the young Rooks have now fledged but will be hanging around the nests and the adults for a while yet. House Sparrows chattered near human habitation, and finally three finches were also commonly recorded: Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Bullfinch. The sun has brought out butterflies (though as I write this it is pouring and they will all be hiding!). A Common Pipistrelle was heard at the very end of our evening walk on the 12th. No other mammal records! The show of Bluebells this year has been excellent – the best ever, according to one observer, and they are spreading!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in April 2017

The two main raptors, Red Kite and Buzzard circled regularly over the wood – the former is often seen wheeling over the nearby housing estate. Woodpigeon and its subtler relative, Stock Dove, were frequent but nobody recorded Collared Dove. Green and Great-spotted Woodpeckers called and drummed. Dunnocks, Robins and Wrens were encountered on most visits, and it was pleasant to hear several Song Thrushes uttering their varied songs in different parts of the wood. Blackbirds too gave out their flute-y melodies. (Which is your favourite song?) Great and Blue Tits sang and called and there were still a few small groups of Long-tailed Tits. All the summer warblers have now arrived in Britain, and many were found in the woods: on the 1st five separate Chiffchaffs and a Blackcap were heard; a couple of days later the first Willow Warbler sang its enchanting song. Quite a contrast to the more assertive sounds we heard from Nuthatches, magpies, Jays, jackdaw, and crows. The Rooks nest are difficult to count now that the leaves are fully out – probably 11 to 13. House Sparrows chirped from areas near human territories and three finch species were recorded: Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Bullfinch. No Greenfinches were heard this month – as a species they have been hit by disease, but they are still around in the woods. The Bluebells have been magnificent, and are definitely spreading from the old woodland area into the new wood. They, like Dog’s Mercury and Wood Anemones are known as Ancient Woodland Indicators (AWIs to the botanists). There has also been a very good display of Lesser Celandine. The mammal list is short – Grey Squirrel, Fox, and Muntjac. Two of these little deer were seen crossing the picnic area on the 3rd – perhaps they were hoping for a change of diet from the Bluebell shoots...Keep those records coming in

Birds and other wildlife recorded in March 2017

Red Kites were seen frequently, sometimes two or three at a time, and probably more often than the Buzzards. An occasional Black-headed Gull flew over the wood. Both Woodpigeon and Stock Dove were seen, and Green and Great-spotted Woodpeckers were definitely heard, the latter beginning to drum their territorial notes. Dunnock and Robin called from within bushes, while Song Thrush and Blackbird sang their uplifting songs – or, in the case of the latter, uttered frequent alarm calls as they flew off. Wrens made loud calls and songs despite their diminutive size, and both Great and Blue Tits set about their territorial business. Long-tailed Tits are not seen in such sizeable flocks now – they are pairing up and will be gathering moss and feathers to construct their intricate springy nests. Chiffchaffs called their name many times over, while Nuthatches whistled and “chitted” from the branches or trunks. All the common corvids (Jay, Carrion Crow, Jay, Magpie) were – well, common! It looks as though the Rook’ nests total about 13, but things are still happening up in the canopy and the number may change. House Sparrows are found near human habitation, and three finch species were recorded: Goldfinch, Chaffinch and the piping Bullfinch.

Wood Anemones in bloom and the first Bluebells were just beginning. As I write this in mid-April, they are a glorious sight and have an equally magnificent scent!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in February 2017

We certainly see Red Kites very frequently over the woods – on most visits. Three were seen together on the 13th. Buzzards are also common visitors, and a third raptor, Kestrel, was also spotted. Woodpigeons are seen on every visit, and frequently both Green and Great-spotted Woodpeckers are seen and heard; listen out for the latter drumming – the Great-spot equivalent of a territorial song. Dunnock, Robin and Wren are never far away, and now the Blackbirds and Song Thrushes are singing beautifully and loudly. Great Tits and Blue Tits are beginning to investigate nest sites – check out their visits to nest boxes. Long-tailed Tits are not seen so much in flocks now – they are beginning to pair up. Nuthatches are seen/ heard regularly. The usual corvids are noisily around – Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. The Rooks seem to have had about 10 nests before “Storm Doris” came through and reduced the nests to a handful; at last count, they were back up to about 13. It’s a perilous business having a home made of sticks at the top of a tree! House Sparrows were seen in the usual places near urban life, and four finch species were observed: Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch and Bullfinch.

Grey Squirrels and Rabbits were seen this month but nobody reported deer. Frogspawn was reported, however!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in January 2017

Three species of birds of prey this month: Red Kites frequently, a Common Buzzard which was seen perching in the old wood (surely, they will breed in our wood soon?), and Sparrowhawk. Woodpigeons were regularly seen and heard but nobody reported Stock Dove. Black-headed Gulls were spotted flying overhead, and both common woodpecker species were reported- Green and Great-spotted. Dunnock, Robin and Blackbird commonly encountered. Song Thrushes and Great Tits were heard singing early in the month, and Blue Tits and Long-tailed Tits were also often met with. Nuthatch was observed but not the shy Treecreeper. The usual corvids were about: Magpie, Jay, Rook, Jackdaw and Carrion Crow; there has been quite a lot of quarrelling between the Rooks and jackdaws, although they have different nest requirements – Rooks have bundles of twigs and sticks, while Jackdaws seek out holes. Already the Rooks are perching on trees beside old nests – we should be able to get a better idea of actual nest numbers soon. Starlings were seen in and near the woods, as were House Sparrows. The usual finches were also seen: Chaffinch, Goldfinch, greenfinch and Bullfinch, the latter often observed as a pair.

The only mammal recorded in January was Grey Squirrel.

The Bluebell shoots are now peeping through the leaf litter in many places – they are quite a lot behind compared to last year.