

Birds and other wildlife Recorded in December 2018

Red Kites are now seen very regularly gliding majestically over the woods and the adjoining estate. Common Buzzards are also regulars – maybe they will breed in the wood soon. Stock Doves and Woodpigeons certainly breed there – though the less noisy and flamboyant hole-nesting Stock Dove is easily overlooked. All the common corvids were recorded – Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow; within the first couple of weeks of the month there was already quite a lot of squabbling between Rooks and Jackdaws eyeing up suitable trees – though the former build stick nests and Jackdaws use tree holes.

The diminutive Goldcrest was recorded – more often heard before it is seen, and the two most common tits – Blue and Great – were frequent. Long-tailed Tits also visited in small parties, calling to each other. Nuthatches whistled and called but no Treecreeper was recorded this month – look out for them, rather well camouflaged, creeping up the trees in search of insects and spiders behind the bark. Wrens and Blackbirds were frequently seen but no Song Thrush. However, the rar-carrying lonely song of a Mistle Thrush was heard from the top of a tree – they are very early breeders so now is the time to listen/look out for them.

Robins were seen regularly, and Dunnocks slightly less so. Of the finch family we had Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Bullfinch – now is the time to look out for Siskins and Bramblings as well as the winter thrushes – Redwing and Fieldfare.

The only mammals actually recorded this month were Muntjac and Grey Squirrel, but there were signs of Fox presence.

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Another rather brief list this month: come on, everyone! Get looking.

Red Kites are seen regularly over the woods (2 together on the 3rd), and over the nearby housing estate; Common Buzzards are perhaps slightly less common – though on the 18th three were seen, and early in the month one was seen flying low in the old wood. Woodpigeons were frequent, and both the common woodpeckers were seen and heard – green and Great-spotted. All the common corvids were around: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. A Goldcrest was heard in the larches, and Blue, Great and Long-tailed Tits were about, the latter often in groups, calling to each other as they flew like little arrows. Nuthatches were seen, and Wrens. Blackbird was seen but no thrushes. Robin and Dunnock were recorded also. Finally, three finch species: Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Bullfinch.

Several grey squirrels were seen but no other mammals were reported.

Birds and other wildlife Recorded in October 2018

A very short list this month! Come on, everyone – get out there and enjoy the birds and other wildlife. Start looking out for winter visitors – Redwings, Fieldfares, extra Mistle Thrushes, Siskins and Bramblings!

All we had recorded this month were: flyover Black-headed Gulls, Stock Dove and Woodpigeon. Both the common woodpeckers – Green and Great-spotted. Of the corvids there were records of Jackdaw and Carrion Crow – what, no Rooks? Blue Tits and Great Tits and many little flocks of Long-tailed Tits – no Coal Tits recorded – check the larches! Nuthatches were heard and occasionally seen. Wren, Blackbird and (rare these days) Song Thrush. Robin and Dunnocks. Finally – the finches – Chaffinch, many Goldfinches and Bullfinch.

Did anyone record any mammals? One squirrel is all I have noted.

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Raptors: Both Sparrowhawk and Buzzard were recorded. A Black-headed Gull was seen flying over the area, no doubt on its way to the canal or some other watery place. Both Woodpigeon and its less obvious cousin, Stock Dove were seen. Green Woodpecker was around but nobody reported a Great-spotted Woodpecker (though they are certainly in the wood). The common corvids were – quite common: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. The diminutive Goldcrest was heard calling from the larches, and there were plenty of sightings of Blue and Great Tit, and some family parties of Long-tailed Tits calling to each other. There were two Chiffchaffs on the 15th of the month – although they are among the summer migrant warblers, many of them, like Blackcaps, are staying around for the winter, so listen out for their calls. Nuthatches were regularly heard as were Wrens, Blackbirds, Robins and Dunnocks. Finally, three members of the finch family were recorded: Goldfinch (there seem to be a lot around at the moment!), Chaffinch and Bullfinch.

The only non-bird records sent in for this month were: Large White, Small White and Speckled Wood butterflies, plus grey Squirrels.

Birds and other wildlife Recorded in August 2018

A quiet month for birds and birdwatchers – the breeding period is generally over, the birds are recovering from the stress of parenthood and moult, and the main migration period is a good way off. Birds recorded this month were: Red Kite and Sparrowhawk, both on several occasions. Woodpigeon and Stock Dove were numerous and both the common woodpeckers – Green and Great-spotted were encountered. Among the corvids, the usual species were seen and often heard: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. No Coal Tits was recorded this month, but plenty of Great Tits and Blue Tits, and small groups of Long-tailed Tits called to each other from tree cover before setting off like small arrows. Nuthatches were commonly found, and the usual small – but surprisingly loud Wren. Blackbird, Robin and Dunnock called and were occasionally seen; and finally, three species of finch: Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Bullfinch. Grey squirrels and Foxes were the only mammals recorded, but Rabbit droppings were also seen.

Birds and other wildlife Recorded in June & July 2018

A Pheasant was heard “coughing”. Red Kites were seen overhead over the woods and the nearby housing estate. Towards the end of July young Sparrowhawks were heard calling, probably begging for food. Stock Doves and Woodpigeons were around regularly, and the last Cuckoo recorded was in early June; their stay in the UK is short, and by now most will be back in Africa. A Tawny Owl was heard calling – listen out for them on warm early autumn nights. Another brief visitor to Britain that has been heard over the woodland is the Swift – only here for about 3 months, and still found in reasonable numbers in urban areas of Leighton Buzzard. Both Green and Great-spotted Woodpeckers were seen, as were the usual quintet of corvids: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. Blue Tit and Great Tit and the not at all closely related Long-tailed Tits were frequent, and occasionally Skylarks were heard singing from the adjoining fields. Three warblers were found: Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Garden Warbler. Nuthatches could be heard whistling. The diminutive but noisy Wren was encountered on most visits, and sometime small gatherings of Starlings. Blackbirds were seen frequently but there were few records of Song Thrush. Of course, this is a quiet time of year compared with the early breeding season – many birds are in post breeding moult and many are busily feeding young and trying not to be seen or heard. Robin, Dunnock and the fairly urban House Sparrows were regular. Finally, three finches were recorded: Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Bullfinch. Look out now for post breeding flocks of tits and finches.

Other wildlife: There have been some splendid butterflies in the last couple of months. Among those recorded were White-letter Hairstreak, Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Common Blue, Marbled White, Essex Skipper, Comma, Peacock and the three “common” whites. Fox and Grey Squirrel were the only mammals seen (though there are plenty of Rabbit droppings) and finally – those Common-spotted Orchids! On one early June day about 450 flowering spikes were counted!

Birds and other wildlife Recorded in May 2018

The only raptor recorded this month was Common Buzzard – keep an eye and an ear open for Red Kites and Sparrowhawks! Stock Doves and Woodpigeons were frequently heard. One of the great highlights was the sight of a Tawny Owl chick perched by the nest box on the 22nd, Tawnies can sometimes be heard calling nearby, but it is a rare treat to see one – and to know that a pair have bred successfully. Both Green and Great-spotted woodpeckers were recorded, as were the common corvids: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. The Rooks have now gone quiet and there were young to be seen at the beginning of the month. Both Blue and Great Tits were often encountered though they are quite quiet now as they are rearing and feeding young. Long-tailed Tits were also seen occasionally. Skylarks sang and hovered over nearby fields. Of the migrant warblers only Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Whitethroat were seen this month – where are the Garden Warblers and Willow Warblers? Nuthatch, Wren, Blackbird, Robin and Dunnock were all recorded. House Sparrow were found near housing, and finally three species of finch were seen: Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Bullfinch.

Some very interesting dragonfly and damselfly records were sent in; a Large Red Damselfly was seen ovipositing (egg-laying); Azure Damselfly was also recorded, and a third species the Broad-bodied Chaser was observed mating, and later the female oviposited. There were still some Frog tadpoles to be seen in the pond. Finally Rabbit and Grey squirrel were seen – most mammals are very difficult to record!

Birds and other wildlife Recorded in April 2018

Common Pheasants are often heard making their “coughing” call; rather more uplifting are the frequent sightings of Buzzards and Red Kites over the wood. Stock Doves and their more obvious cousins, Woodpigeons, were regulars. Although Tawny Owls were not actually recorded in the wood in April – we know they were there, as two of the wardens saw a chick on its own in late May, great news! No Green Woodpeckers were observed, but Great Spotted Woodpeckers were heard drumming and alarming on several occasions. All the common corvids were recorded: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow and Rook, with the Rookery having approximately 21 nests – always difficult to count once the trees have come into leaf. Blue Tits, Great Tits and a few Long-tailed Tits were recorded (but no Coal Tits – though they are almost certainly there, especially in the Larches and conifers). Skylarks sang almost overhead, and three summer migrant warblers also warbled – Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Willow Warbler (Will someone please find a Garden Warbler and a Whitethroat or two to add to the list!). Nuthatches were active, as were Blackbirds, Robins and the more skulking Dunnocks. Finally, Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Bullfinch were also spotted.

April was a beautiful month for plants: The Dog’s Mercury flowers had virtually gone over, though a few green flowers remained. Wood Anemones and Bluebells were stunning, and several patches of Primrose shone palely. All these plants are Ancient woodland Indicators, and all flower early in the year as they are shaded out once the woodland canopy grows over.

Birds and other wildlife Recorded in March 2018

Red Kites were seen circling over the woods on virtually every visit; sightings of these uplifting raptors now seem to outnumber the Common Buzzards. Woodpigeons and Stock Doves were seen on most visits – though the latter are less obtrusive. Both Green and Great-spotted Woodpeckers made regular noisy appearances. Most of the common corvids were seen: Magpie, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Rook – though nobody recorded a Jay; the Rookery is now firmly established with at least 11 nests by the end of the month – and more since then. Blue Tit, Great Tit and occasional small groups of Long-tailed Tit – though these are now beginning to pair off and are more frequently seen in ones and twos. The first Chiffchaff was recorded on the 25th – now is the time to start looking out for other spring migrants; Willow Warblers and Blackcaps are around elsewhere in Bedfordshire. Four noisy Nuthatches were encountered on the 9th of the month. Other regulars were: Wren, Blackbird, Robin and Dunnock. Finally, a suite of finches: Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, 7 Siskins on the 11th, (will we see them in April still?), and Bullfinch.

Please keep those records coming in!

Birds and other wildlife Recorded in February 2018

A Pheasant was spotted near the biofuel field – probably a refugee from the shooting fraternity. Red Kites were seen fairly regularly overhead, and a Sparrowhawk was also recorded. Stock Doves were heard, and Woodpigeons were seen on most visits. Tawny Owls were heard calling from the wood at night by nearby residents. Great Spotted Woodpeckers were heard drumming on several visits. All the usual corvids were seen: Magpie, Jay, Rook, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw – and the Rooks are certainly taking possession of nests; it’s hard to tell which nests have survived and which are being rebuilt – perhaps half a dozen – hopefully more, so keep looking! Blue Tits and Great Tits are now beginning to sing a little on warmer days, and there are still small parties of Long-tailed Tits about. Nuthatches are whistling and calling – no Treecreepers were recorded this month. Wrens, Blackbirds and a Mistle Thrush were seen and heard, as were Robin and Dunnock. Five members of the finch family were observed: Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Siskin (a small party on the 23rd) and Bullfinch.

One of the most exciting sightings was that of Roe Deer in the old wood on the 12th. They have been seen in or by the wood in previous years occasionally, but they are not at all common in Bedfordshire.

Please keep your records coming in!

Birds and other wildlife Recorded in January 2018

A fairly quiet month – nothing spectacular to mark the beginning of a new recording year! Red Kites were seen very frequently, soaring majestically over the woods and nearby houses. Woodpigeons were seen and heard on most visits; their subtler relative, the Stock Dove, was also recorded. Green and Great-

spotted Woodpeckers were around on most visits, and drumming by the latter has been noted. Again, all the usual corvids were seen: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. Only 8 nests remain in the Rookery – it remains to be seen whether the Rooks will regain control; the Jackdaws are showing interest, but they are primarily a hole-nesting species. Keep looking and counting! Blue Tits and Great Tits are regular; Long-tailed Tits are just beginning to move as ones and twos and no longer in large family parties. Nuthatches, Wrens, Robins and Dunnocks can be found on most visits. Blackbirds will soon be beginning to sing – though mostly we hear their alarm calls; Mistle Thrushes are early nesters and one has been heard singing, and a Song Thrush has been seen – the first for quite a while. Finally, several members of the finch family have been recorded: Chaffinch, Bullfinch, Goldfinch and Greenfinch. There seem to be more Greenfinches around in gardens – is the species beginning to recover from the nasty disease that has caused its numbers to plummet over the last few years?