

Birds and other wildlife recorded in December 2020

Just a short list this month – blame the brevity on the pandemic and the mud!

Red Kites were seen regularly over the woods and over adjoining roads and gardens. Wood pigeons never fail to be seen. Most of the corvids were also recorded: Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Jay and Carrion Crow. Fifteen Rooks were spotted on the 8th – they will already be eyeing up potential nest sites, and probably having quarrels with the Jackdaw population even though one makes a stick nest, and one species seeks out holes! Blue Tits were seen but nobody recorded Great Tits! A small flock of Long-tailed Tits was also seen. Nuthatches were about, as were Wrens, Blackbirds and some Redwings, winter thrush visitors from Scandinavia. Finally, to the finches – only Chaffinch and Bullfinch were noted.

And two mammals: A Grey Squirrel and a stout domesticated cat! Please record any birds and wildlife you see while walking in the woods – it's very important to keep up records of what uses our woods – we can see changes from year to year, and also use the wealth of wildlife as a "weapon" against any threatened development.

Birds and other wildlife recorded in October & November 2020

There have been fewer records coming in over the last couple of months, but this does not mean that the wildlife in the woods is diminishing! Red Kites glide regularly over the woods and the nearby roads; it's rare to go out over the Soulbury Road without seeing one of these uplifting birds overhead. Nobody actually recorded Buzzard or Sparrowhawk but they were probably there. Woodpigeon and Stock Doves were heard and seen. A Tawny Owl was observed in late November, and sometimes the "ooh-oohing" of the male was heard from a nearby bedroom! Greater-spotted Woodpecker and Green Woodpecker were recorded as were most of the corvids: Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook, Jay and Carrion Crow. We have had the occasional Raven "cronking" overhead in the past so listen out for it and maybe spot its distinctive wedge-shaped tail. Blue, Great and Coal Tits were all seen as were a few small flocks of Long-tailed Tits. Nuthatches are quite vocal and their whistles and "chacks" are heard on most visits. Wrens are regular as are Blackbirds – ten were counted on one short visit to the woods on the 9th of November. No Song Thrushes were recorded but a flock of the migrating northern thrush, Fieldfare, was recorded flying west over the area in mid October. Look out for Redwings too – in the woods and in the gardens. Robin, Chaffinch and Bullfinch were about – but some really common species like Dunnock and Greenfinch were not observed.

The only mammal seen was, of course, the Grey squirrel!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in August & September 2020

Not a huge list this time, even though it is a combined one for two months. A quiet time of year for the birds and a quiet time for records coming in! Now we are into autumn there may be a change – breeding is over (except perhaps for Wood pigeons), winter migrants are beginning to arrive and most of our summer visitors will have departed. You may still see Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs and there will be House Martins around for some time. Anyway, here is this time's rather short list of what's been seen in the Woods: Common Buzzard and Red Kites have been fairly frequent, and both Wood pigeons and Stock Doves are regulars. The calls of Tawny Owl have been picked up regularly by visitors to the woods and by nearby residents – they are almost certainly breeding in the woods.

Great-spotted and Green Woodpeckers are around – and there have been calls heard from juvenile Green woodpeckers. The usual common corvids are about: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook (only in small numbers) and Carrion Crow. Blue Tit, Great Tit and Coal Tit have been recorded; nobody recorded a sighting of their very distant relative, the Long-tailed Tit – but look out for them now as they form flocks and constantly call to one another as they flit like little arrows from tree to tree.

Skylarks were recorded from neighbouring fields, and Chiffchaffs were still calling into late September. Some, like Blackcaps, may overwinter here. Nuthatch, Wren, Blackbird and Robin were all seen or heard; no Song Thrush anyone? Dunnocks, quiet but common, were also observed. And finally – the finches: Chaffinch, Goldfinch (also now beginning to form flocks), and Bullfinch. The sunnier days also witnessed many **butterflies**, including Large White, Speckled Wood, Gatekeeper, Green-veined White, Peacock, Comma and Red Admiral. Keep a look out – some species will be around for a while yet!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in July 2020

A very short bird list this month, not because the birds weren't around but the human recorders were lacking! It really is important to send in a note of what you see even if it is something really common that you are sure someone else will have recorded!

So, this month's bird list begins with a sad story: Sparrowhawk ; an injured one was taken to Tiggywinkles where it was x-rayed and found to have both wings broken and a broken "shoulder". We had feared at first that it had been shot but fortunately this was not the case and were reassured by the staff telling us that any shot birds of prey are reported to the police Wildlife crime Unit. Sadly, nothing could be done to restore this bird to a normal life, so it was put down. Other birds seen were Red Kite, Stock Dove and Woodpigeon. An adult Green Woodpecker was around with a juvenile. Magpies and Carrion Crows were spotted but nobody actually recorded Jackdaw, Rook or Jay – though we're pretty sure they were there!

Two warblers were noted: Chiffchaff and Blackcap, and there were also Nuthatches, Wren, Blackbird, Robin and Dunnock. Finally, two Bullfinches on the 11th.

Many butterflies were recorded, sometimes in considerable numbers: Meadow Brown (16 on the 11th), Small White, Red Admiral, Gatekeeper, Large White, Green-veined White, Ringlet, Peacock, Marbled Whites (many on the 12th), Speckled Wood and Small Skipper. There were certainly many others – keep looking!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in June 2020

Well, mid-summer's day has passed, and many birds have now completed their breeding for the year – though some species will continue with second or even third broods. This month Buzzard and Red Kites have been spotted fairly regularly. Woodpigeons and Stock Doves are recorded on most visits to the woods, and – for the first time this year – Swifts were seen flying overhead (on the 8th); do look out for these iconic summer visitors which spend a very short time in the UK and virtually never stop flying except when they nest. Great-spotted Woodpecker was recorded – but not Green Woodpecker – look out for these in your garden and on anthills in the woods, and keep an eye out for their droppings: white and shaped like a question mark, and full of black ant-bits!

The usual corvids were seen and heard: Magpie, Jay, Rook, Carrion Crow and Jackdaw. There are Ravens not far from here so keep a look out and listen for their "cronking" calls. Blue and Great Tits are common, and Long-tailed Tits were seen in ones and twos - their groups will not form until after all the breeding is over. Skylarks were recorded singing over nearby grassy fields. Several warblers were about: Chiffchaff, garden warbler, Common Whitethroat, Willow warbler and Blackcap; the Blackcaps were seen feeding young on the 8th. More frequently they now remain in the UK, or in Europe over winter (rather than return to Africa) – and this may be partly due to garden bird feeding. Nuthatches were seen from time to time – and their schoolboy whistle heard. Wrens, Blackbirds, Robins and Dunnocks were regularly seen – and Song Thrushes on occasions. Finally, only two finch species: Chaffinch (which are suffering a decline everywhere), and Goldfinch. And to conclude – House Sparrows near the urban fringe of the woods.

Look out as well for butterflies – there have been huge numbers of Meadow Browns, and a lot of attractive Marbled Whites. Other species noted include Large Skipper, Small and Green-Veined Whites and Speckled Woods.

Do keep an eye out for interesting wildlife as you enjoy the woods – and do send us your records!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in May 2020

Not a large number of sightings this month, not because there was a shortage of wildlife – partly because fewer of us were out recording, but also in the height of the breeding season birds are keeper a lot quieter – they don't want to be seen or heard returning to nests with vulnerable chicks. A Black-headed Gull flew over occasionally, and the Red Kites were often seen. Woodpigeons were regularly seen, and the Stock Doves are paired up. A Great-spotted Woodpecker was heard but no record this month of the Green Woodpecker. All the common corvids were observed: Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook (with no nests visible anymore), Jay and Carrion Crow. Of the Tits, only Blue and Great Tit were recorded. Skylarks are singing from the adjacent fields. Several warbler species were recorded: Chiffchaff (unmistakeable!), Garden Warbler and Blackcap (these two can sound awfully similar). Nuthatches were regularly seen or heard as were Wren, Blackbird and Robin. The only finch observed was the Chaffinch.

A number of butterfly species were seen – Orange-tip, Small Skipper, Speckled Wood – come on you butterfly enthusiasts! Get looking! And the Common Spotted-Orchids are highly visible; has anyone seen a Bee Orchid or a Pyramidal in the woods yet? We have had them in the past in small numbers.

Please keep sending your records in – it will add to your enjoyment to study what you see and hear and will enhance other people's enjoyment of the woods. However, everyone must stick to the government guidelines about daily exercise.

Birds and other wildlife recorded in April 2020

An unusual flyover was a Grey Heron. Red Kites and Buzzards were observed fairly frequently – two of the latter on the 19th. Sparrowhawks were seen mating on the 3rd. We have had them breeding before, so listen out for the plaintive cries of hungry young in a few weeks. Woodpigeons and Stock Doves were seen also relating intimately. Tawny Owls are heard by local residents – male and female interacting vocally. Great-spotted Woodpeckers have been drumming, and Green Woodpeckers have also been pairing up. The usual corvids have been around: Magpie, jackdaw, Jays (in considerable numbers), and Carrion Crows. The Rook nests seem to have stabilised at about 12, and young have already been spotted a few times in the nests. More unusually, a Raven has also passed over the woods – they do breed nearby.

On to the smaller birds: Blue, Great and Coal Tits have been recorded, as has the distantly related Long-tailed Tits – they are no longer in flocks calling prettily to each other, just in ones and twos as they pair up. Skylarks can be heard and seen over the nearby fields, including the old biofuel field which is now full of a variety of brown, white and part-coloured sheep! Several warblers are now resident in the woods: Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs, and Willow Warblers.

There are at least two pairs of Nuthatch, and of course the resident Wrens, Robin, Dunnock and Blackbirds are frequently recorded. There was only one Song Thrush recorded – we need to get up earlier! Several members of the finch family were observed: Chaffinch, Greenfinch (listen for its wheezing song), Goldfinch and Bullfinch; and finally, House sparrows in the area nearest to human occupation.

In addition to the birds, there are records of Brimstones, mating Peacocks, Speckled Woods and small Whites, as well as Common bee-fly, Buff-tailed Bumblebees, ladybirds....there are many others, so do look out for insect life too. The Bluebells have been spectacular this year – and quite early – and a patch of Wild garlic has also been recorded. The leaves of the Common-spotted Orchids are showing well. There's plenty of plantlife to observe – send in what you see!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in March 2020

A Grey Heron was an unexpected flyover – though there was one at the little pond in the woods last month! Two birds of prey were observed: Buzzard (two were displaying on the 31st), and Red Kites are also frequently seen over the woods and over the nearby housing estate. On the nearby fields to the west and north there have been Skylarks singing, and a Lapwing was heard calling on the 24th – do you remember when Lapwings bred in the set-aside field more recently given over to a biofuel crop? Woodpigeons and Stock Doves are regularly seen, and a pair of the latter were by a nest hole. Tawny Owl was heard regularly – though not seen – by local residents. Both common woodpeckers were observed, the Great-Spots occasionally drumming. All the common corvids were around: Magpies, Jackdaws (in considerable noisy quantities), Jays, and Carrion Crows. The Rooks seem to be getting more successful. After a poor nesting start – all the old nests were blown out during the high winds – the nests were in single figures by early March, and by the end of the month it looked as though there were 14 possible nests. Let's hope so! All the usual tits were about – Blue, Great and the less frequent Coal Tit; look out for them going in and out of the various boxes over the coming weeks; most of the boxes were occupied last nesting season. Their distant relatives, the Long-tailed Tits are also regularly recorded; their flocking behaviour will gradually reduce down to paired behaviour. Summer migrants are on their way – there are already (5th April) reports of occasional Swallows in Bedfordshire – and there have now been many records of singing Chiffchaffs in the woods, and the first Blackcap heard on the last day of the month. Nuthatches are pairing up, and Treecreepers have been heard with their silvery song. Wrens, Blackbirds and Song Thrushes have been in song, as have the ubiquitous Robin and Dunnock. Finches: Chaffinch, Goldfinch and Bullfinch, and finally, House Sparrows, which are found near to the urban edges of the wood.

Butterflies are now being seen regularly: Brimstone, Peacock and Comma all overwinter in adult form, so

they are the first to emerge, along with Small Tortoiseshell and – increasingly likely – Red Admiral, which has always been regarded as a migrant, but which now is probably overwintering in small numbers.

Mammals: Mammals are always difficult to record – elusive, often nocturnal creatures. There has been evidence of Badgers, and Red Fox. Earlier in the year Chinese Water Deer, Roe (quite a rarity) and Muntjac were seen; you may need a dawn or dusk visit for these!

Early flowers: The Wood Anemones and Primroses are increasing in number, though the Snowdrops seem to be retreating. And as I write – the Bluebells are beginning to bloom; hopefully this year we will not see the blatant disregard for their wellbeing that we encountered among some selfish visitors and photographers last spring!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in February 2020

Not many sightings sent in this month, perhaps not surprisingly given the wet and chill and mud! But – a real surprise – on the 17th, a Grey Heron was seen at the pond! I think this is a first for the site. A highlight. Buzzard were seen occasionally and both Woodpigeon and Stock Doves were around – in breeding mode! Both the common woodpeckers – Great-spotted and Green were seen, and so were some, but not all of the corvids: Magpie, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Jay. No Rooks were seen, and the nests have been reduced to only 2; this is normally an early-breeding species, so the lack of records is worrying. Please look out and report any Rook sightings. There were several records of Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit and some Long-tailed Tits, still in small flocks. Nuthatch, Wren and Robin were fairly common, and Song Thrushes are now singing loudly and regularly – listen out for their beautiful repetitive song. Chaffinch and Bullfinch were also recorded.

Birds and other wildlife recorded in January 2020

Not a huge number of records were sent in this month – was it the lack of birds, or did the mud underfoot put some of us off?! Red Kites were seen frequently, gliding majestically over the wood and the nearby houses. Woodpigeon and Stock Doves were fairly common, and the Great-Spotted Woodpeckers were seen (no Green Woodpeckers recorded this month?). The usual corvids were around: Magpie, Jackdaw, Jay, Carrion Crow and Rooks; how many nests will be in the rookery this spring? Both Blue Tit and Great Tit were seen, and Nuthatches appeared on most visits. As one might expect Wren, Robin and Blackbird were seen or heard on virtually every visit. Listen out for Mistle Thrush, an early breeder, and for Song Thrushes that have already been singing nearby for a few weeks. Finally, Chaffinch, Goldfinches and Bullfinch have all been recorded

PLEASE send in your records – even of birds that you think are really common; don't leave it up to just two or three people!

and listening; there's a lot about if you look hard enough!