

Birds and other wildlife recorded in December 2024

Birds: A Common Pheasant was spotted – one that got away! Another unexpected sighting was a flyover Little Egret. Red Kites were seen quite regularly, gliding magnificently over the wood and neighbouring houses. There were also several sightings of Common Buzzard. Three species of gull were recorded flying overhead: Lesser black-back, Herring Gull and – most commonly – Black-headed Gull. Many Woodpigeons were observed, and the occasional Collared Dove, but no Stock Dove. Great-spotted Woodpeckers were seen - and heard but no Green Woodpecker recorded this month.

The corvids were observed fairly regularly: Magpie (8 on the 11th), Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, and Jays and two Ravens flew over on the 11th. The Rooks are nowhere near as common as they once were, and their nests are now reduced to a mere two - in the newer woodland by a side path leading to the bridleway. Rookeries do move but they were once such an important feature of our wood!

Goldcrests were encountered in the conifers and the tit family was well represented: Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit (less frequent always); and their very distant relative the Long-tailed Tit – including a flock of nine on the 11th. Nuthatch was heard and seen, as was Wren. Starlings were also recorded. Blackbirds were about and so were some of the winter thrushes: Redwing, including a group of 8 birds on the 11th. So far nobody has recorded Fieldfares.

Robins were fairly regularly recorded as were Dunnocks, and – nearer the houses – House Sparrows. A flock of 15 Skylarks feeding on an adjoining field was put up by a Red Kite. Finally, the finches: there were reports of Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Bullfinch (quite a rarity these days), and Goldfinch, often in small groups.

The mammal records this month were: Roe Deer and Red Squirrel

Please send in your records – and a Happy New Year to all you nature lovers!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in November 2024

It was indeed a wet month, and not so many visits were paid by the regular recorders. However, here are the results: Red Kites were seen fairly frequently – but no other raptors were noted. Occasionally a Great-spotted Woodpecker was heard (rather than seen), and the usual corvids were recorded – Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw and Carrion Crow. No Rooks were recorded and there seem to be only a couple of old nests remaining.

Goldcrests were heard occasionally, and there were plentiful records of Great and Blue Tits and some small flocks of Long-tailed Tits. Nuthatches were recorded – their calls are quite loud and distinctive, as are those of Wrens whose size is not in proportion to its ability to make loud alarm calls!

Of the thrush family – Blackbird and Song Thrush were recorded; the Song Thrush certainly something of a rarity in the woods recently. Look out for Redwings, the Nordic thrush cousin – I've had them in my nearby garden recently (quite exciting!). Robin and Dunnock fairly regular, and House Sparrow was recorded near the edge of a nearby road. And that leaves the finches: Chaffinch, Bullfinch and Goldfinch all recorded this month.

The usual mammals were recorded: Grey Squirrel and Red Fox.

Please keep your records coming in – they may not look exciting to you, but it really is important to keep records of what species are around!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in October 2024

Birds: Another rather quiet month! A Common Buzzard was seen, and Red Kites floated overhead, sometimes quite low down. Woodpigeons were recorded but not Stock Dove or Collared Dove. The usual corvids were about: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. Keep an eye (and an ear) open for Ravens – they are about much more frequently nowadays. In size contrast – there were some records of the small Goldcrest, and several sightings of Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit (not so frequent!), and Long-tailed Tit. We still get some warblers at this time of year – and some may well be around for much of the winter period; a Blackcap was seen on the 22nd. Nuthatch and Treecreeper were found, as were Wren (often

making a “tac” alarm call from a shrub), Blackbird, and the Scandinavian cousin Redwing, recorded on the 15th. Look out for them in the leaf litter as well as calling overhead. Robin and Dunnock were regulars, but not a single finch was recorded! No Chaffinch? No Goldfinch? No Greenfinch? And they will be joined now by Siskins. Keep looking!

Other wildlife: The only mammal recorded this month was – wait for it – Grey Squirrel. Two species of butterfly were observed: Speckled Wood (three on the 7th) and Red Admiral.

Another insect recorded was Hornet (not of the Asian variety). There are still plenty of insects to be seen, especially on the warmer, drier days, so keep an eye out.

Do record what you see – birds, animals, insects, plants – it is very important to keep a record of what inhabits the wood, and a wealth of material dealing with the non-human inhabitants of the wood helps to protect it when it comes to nearby developments.

Birds and other wildlife recorded in September 2024

Birds: Quite a quiet month! Many common bird species that we might normally expect are not on the list, but many of the observers have also been absent for a while! As the weather becomes more autumnal the birds and the humans may be making themselves more visible in the woods.

Two species of birds of prey were observed: Red Kite and Sparrowhawk. The usual trio of pigeons and doves were fairly frequent: Stock Dove, Woodpigeon and Collared Dove. Great-spotted Woodpecker was heard/seen but no Green Woodpecker was recorded. The common corvids were also about: Magpie (at least 4 on the 12th), Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow.

Goldcrest, one of our smallest species, was detected – they are usually in the conifers/larches, and the common tits were also recorded: Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, and Long-tailed Tit. The tits, having had their breeding season will often now be found in small flocks. Blackbirds were fairly commonly found. The only warbler recorded was Chiffchaff; some of these, and some Black Caps may well be around in the winter months. The essentially woodland pair – Nuthatch and Treecreeper were encountered, as were Wren, Robin and Dunnock. The only finch recorded was Goldfinch; look out for Chaffinch and Bullfinch – we still have them in the woods.

Mammals: Grey Squirrel and Rabbit

Butterflies and other insects: Green-veined White and Speckled Wood. A Southern Hawker was recorded, as was a Box Tree Moth, the latter a handsome moth but one that is a very unwelcome invader if you have a Box hedge.

Birds and other wildlife recorded in August 2024

Birds: Quite a quiet month, and quite a few normally expected species missing. The recorded raptors were Red Kite and Common Buzzard. Stock Dove and Woodpigeon were noted but no Collared Doves, which are normally found fairly close to the houses and roads. Both Green and Great-spotted Woodpeckers were seen. In size contrast to most of the above were Goldcrest, and three tits; Blue Tit, Great Tit and their very distant relative the Long-tailed Tit. Three warblers were recorded: Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler and Blackcap. Nuthatch and Treecreeper were observed; the latter is often very difficult to actually see as it is camouflaged against the bark of trees. Wrens were seen and heard – one of the smallest birds with one of the longest and loudest song and calls!

Blackbird was frequent as was Robin, and what about the missing species? Birds are often very unobtrusive in late summer; they are often exhausted after breeding and feeding young; it is time for moult, and the growing of new feathers uses a lot of energy, and some must get in tip-top condition for migration. Some of those we would normally see - but did not – include : Rook, Starling, Dunnock and Chaffinch. In fact, no finches were recorded at all!

Mammals: 3 mammal species were noted: Grey Squirrel, Muntjac and a Chinese Water Deer.

Butterflies: Large White, Small White, Green-veined White, Brimstone, Peacock, Meadow Brown, Ringlet(in considerable numbers), Gatekeeper, Speckled Wood.

Other insects: An exciting and relatively new visitor to our area is the Jersey Tiger moth, which was recorded at least twice. A photo of one is on our Facebook page. A Southern Hawker dragonfly was seen, and one unfortunate observer commented on the large number of mosquitoes present on a mid-month visit!

Look out for autumnal Plants; there is still Agrimony in flower, some Tall Melilot and some Fleabane near the pond area; plenty more too, including late-flowering Bramble.

Birds and other wildlife recorded in July 2024

Birds: July and August are quiet months for many bird species; breeding is over or nearing its end, moult begins – and the birds themselves are keeping a low profile as they are not in best condition. There were several sightings of Red Kite overhead, and also a Common Buzzard. The usual Woodpigeon, Stock Dove and occasional Collared Dove were about, and so were both Great-spotted Woodpecker and Green Woodpecker.

The corvids were all recorded: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook, Crow and the much rarer Raven. In contrast, one of the smallest of our birds was also found: Goldcrest. Blue Tit and great Tit were frequently encountered – but no Coal Tit this month; look and listen around the conifers. Long-tailed Tit were also seen.

The only two warblers this month were Chiffchaff (in quite large numbers) and Blackcap. Also observed were Treecreeper (very difficult to see as it merges into the bark of trees!), Wren, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Robin and Dunnock. A Swift flew over, Skylark hovered over the adjoining fields, and a couple of Greenfinch were seen on the 11th. Once again, the merlin app picked up a Spotted Flycatcher.

Mammals: Only Grey Squirrels this month.

Butterflies: Large White, Small White, Comma, Speckled Wood, Marbled White, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, many Ringlets.

Birds and other wildlife recorded in June 2024

Several records of Red Kites overhead – always an uplifting sight and sound; and the calling of a juvenile Buzzard (breeding in the wood?). Stock Dove, Woodpigeon, Collared Dove and Feral Pigeon all noted. Both common woodpeckers, Green and Great-spotted, were seen and heard, and unsurprisingly the common corvids were also around, sometimes in abundance: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow – and also Raven; listen out for its loud “cronking” sound and have a look at the shape of its tail. Carrion Crows have straight tail end in flight – a Raven has a wedge-shaped tail.

There are Goldcrests around; one of our smallest birds, but quite vocal. Several have been seen in the picnic area. The usual tits have been recorded: Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit and Long-tailed Tit (their very distant relative). Several warbler species have been noted: Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Blackcap and Garden Warbler – these last two are quite difficult to tell apart in their song. It's worth having a look at Xeno Canto on the internet to listen to the differences! A Whitethroat was recorded and so were Nuthatch, Treecreeper and Wren. Blackbird and Song Thrush were fairly frequent – and a Mistle Thrush was also detected. Robins were regulars! There is quite a lot of Skylark song on the field to the west of the bridleway. Finally, to the finches: Chaffinch, Greenfinch (several called to accompany the work party on the 24th!), Bullfinch and Goldfinch.

Other wildlife: The usual mammal suspects: Rabbit, Grey Squirrel and Muntjac. It's not been a great summer for butterflies, but people have noted Meadow Browns, Ringlets and the first of the Gatekeepers. A Chimney Sweeper moth was seen – small, black and day-flying. A Banded Demoiselle was also seen; look out for members of the dragonfly family.

Finally – the Common Spotted Orchids have done well – over 100 on the 24th, but no Bee Orchid recorded yet. We have had a few in the past so do look out for them. Other common flowers to spot: Agrimony, Selfheal and various vetches.

Please send in your records; it may be ordinary and commonplace to you, but we do need to know and record what is there – particularly with the threat of building very nearby!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in May 2024

Birds: Red Kites and a Common Buzzard have been seen over the Wood. Woodpigeons were common, and there were occasional records of Stock Dove; no Collared Doves this month – look for them near the edges of the wood, near human habitation. Both the common woodpeckers were heard and occasionally seen: Green and Great-spotted. All the common corvids were around – Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook (very few nests this year), and carrion Crow; a Raven called in passing – they are breeding in Rushmere CP. The common tits were also about: Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, and a small flock of the distantly related Long-tailed Tits, in the “pony field”.

Three warbler species were recorded: Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Garden Warbler – these last two are quite hard to separate on their songs now. Someone said that Garden Warblers sound rather like Blackcaps on a high! There were plenty of records of Wren, Blackbird, Song Thrush and Robin, and (rare at this time of year), a Mistle Thrush as early breeders they are usually heard much earlier in the year and then keep pretty quiet. Dunnocks and House Sparrows were recorded, and Skylarks sang from adjoining fields. Pied Wagtails do visit nearby gardens with ponds, and one was recorded in the wood. Of the finch family – Greenfinch (which does seem to be doing better now after a long period of disease) – and Chaffinch. No Goldfinches? The bird app, Merlin, recorded a Nightingale; it's not out of the question, but I am a little cynical!

Mammals: Roe Deer; Muntjac; Grey Squirrel; Rabbit; Red Fox.

Butterflies: It hasn't been a great year for butterfly records so far – they probably need some more sun and warmth (like us mere humans!) But the following have been recorded in May, though there will have been other species too: Brimstone,, Small White, Orange-Tip, Holly Blue, Peacock, Speckled Wood

Plants: Common Vetch is now quite common Good to see Ragged Robin, a plant normally associated with damp habitats (!)

Do send in your records of any wildlife that you find interesting!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in April 2024

Red Kites were seen soaring overhead – how magnificent they are! – but nobody recorded the other common raptors: Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, or Kestrel. A Mallard was seen overhead – and so was a moorhen (curious). There were Stock Doves and plentiful Wood pigeon, but no woodpeckers were noted; surely there must be some drumming going on! One species new to the list – and not entirely welcome – was Rose-ringed Parakeet, a species that is taking over many urban areas throughout the whole of Europe! Despite many ideas and research about escapees and deliberate releases the jury is out on exactly how they started to proliferate so quickly and readily. Back to more normal species: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook (not in large numbers) and Carrion Crow were recorded. So were the tiny (but vocal) Goldcrest, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit and Long-tailed Tit. A Marsh Tit was identified by an ornithological app., but since this is pretty rare - I have my doubts! Several of the warblers were recorded: Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Black Cap and the slightly frantic-sounding Garden warbler. Nuthatches were seen and heard as were Wren, singing and alarming, Blackbird and Song Thrush. Robin and Dunnock and House Sparrow (the latter fairly near to housing). Skylarks sang in the adjoining fields. A Pied Wagtail was identified, possibly on its way to someone's garden pond; and finally, two members of the finch family: Chaffinch, and Greenfinch (good to see these returning in larger numbers after a severe decline).

Mammals: Muntjac and Roe Deer - the latter very obligingly appearing on a work party day. Also, Grey Squirrel, Fox and rabbit.

Butterflies: Brimstone, Peacock, Red Admiral, Orange-tip, Holly Blue and Small White – there will be more; look out for them!

Other insects: Only Buff-tail Bumblebee and White-tailed Bumblebee were noted but there is plenty more to look out for!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in March 2024

There have been many sightings of Red Kites over the wood. (Do you remember when we had to go towards the West country to see one?!). Buzzards are also seen and heard calling regularly. Other “flyovers” were Mallard and Lesser Black-backed Gull. Stock Dove and Woodpigeon were regularly spotted, and both the common woodpeckers, Green and Great-spotted were recorded, the latter heard both drumming and calling. The usual corvids were noted: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow and Rook, the latter now with apparently about 8 nests between the old and new Woods. A Raven was also heard – they do breed at Rushmere so listen out for their “cronking” calls; maybe we’ll get a pair in Linslade too!

To the somewhat smaller birds: Goldcrest, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Great Tit all recorded as were Long-tailed Tits. The warblers – Chiffchaff and Blackcap were recorded; in the past they have always been regarded as migrants to the UK, but more are now lingering here over winter too! Nuthatch and Treecreepers were about – what better place for them than a quiet wood? Wrens were regularly heard – both making their alarm calls, and their long loud songs. Starlings were recorded – nearer to human habitation, and three of the thrush species: Blackbird, Song Thrush, and Redwings, the last of which will soon be departing to more northerly breeding areas. Robins, Dunnocks, and House Sparrows were all observed – the Robins often in large (musical!) numbers. Skylarks called in the adjoining fields. A Pied Wagtail was recorded near gardens, but – oddly – the only finch recorded was Greenfinch!

Mammals: Only Grey squirrels were actually noted.

Amphibians: Frogspawn in the pond.

Plants and trees: The Bluebells have started to show – always a wonderful spectacle. And they do seem to be spreading. Look out for the blooms and buds on many other species such as Hawthorn and Blackthorn, and Cherry – and Cowslips, Dog’s mercury and other species that favour woodland.

Butterflies: Brimstone, Peacock and Comma all recorded in March. Look out for Orange-tip, Red Admiral and Holly Blue!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in February 2024

Red Kites were frequently recorded gliding over head, but no Buzzard this month. Green Woodpeckers were also noted on several occasions, sometimes two calling against or to one another. No Great-spotted Woodpeckers noted, however; listen out for early spring drumming! The common corvids were all noted: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. The Rooks are just beginning to start on new nests – virtually none were left from last year – there have been some very strong winds. Do keep an eye out for activity in the old wood. Goldcrests have been recorded – a tiny bird but quite vocal with a high register. Blue Tits, Great Tits and Long-tailed Tits have all been seen – but nobody recorded a Coal Tit. They are there somewhere! Nuthatches are very vocal now and have been recorded on several occasions. Wrens are also regularly heard – both singing and uttering alarm calls.

In the thrush family: Blackbirds, Song Thrushes, and Redwings – but no records of Fieldfares. Dunnocks and – nearer to human habitation – House Sparrows are about. Among the finches we’ve had records of Chaffinch, Greenfinch, and Goldfinch and the delightful Siskin, a bird of the forests, mainly recorded near here in the winter – and venturing onto garden feeders too.

The mammal list is brief – Grey Squirrel and Rabbit (including one deceased specimen). Signs of Badger activity and the aroma of Fox. There is also Frog spawn in the pond. The Dog’s Mercury is in bloom and orchid rosettes are appearing widely. Look out for the fungi too.

Birds and other wildlife recorded in January 2024

A Pheasant was heard calling. Several times Red Kites were seen circling overhead – what an uplifting sight! Also flying over were various gulls: Lesser Black-backs and Black-headed. Woodpigeons and Stock Doves were recorded but not Collared Doves, usually encountered near the housing. Both common woodpeckers were about, Green, and Great-Spotted. The usual corvids were recorded: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. Only two Rook nests so far – rookeries are mobile habitations, but it would be sad to lose ours – it doesn’t seem many years ago that the nests were numbered in their 40s and even more! Goldcrest has been recorded more than once – not a rarity but often hard to hear (especially as one ages). Also, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit and a small flock of Long-tailed Tits. Nuthatch and Wren were around – both often heard before seen! Four of the thrush family were recorded: Blackbird, Song Thrush, and their wintering cousins – Fieldfare and Redwing, but no Mistle Thrush; these are early breeders so it’s really worth listening out for their long carrying and slightly melancholy calls now. Robin, Dunnock and House Sparrow were also

recorded, as was the unexpected Grey Wagtail, probably on its way to local garden ponds. Finally, the finches: Chaffinch, Greenfinch (whose population may be recovering somewhat from a finch disease), Bullfinch and quite a lot of Goldfinches.

Other wildlife: Muntjac were seen, and so – more unusually - were Roe Deer; on one occasion five of the latter were recorded, including 3 bucks. Good news! Grey Squirrels were seen a-plenty, and there were occasional Fox sightings. Bee Orchid rosettes were seen in the area not far from the pond, and Hazel female flowers, really tiny and scarlet, were plentiful. Look out for other early woodland specialists!

Thanks to all those who send in their records; it really helps to build up a picture of the wealth of wildlife in the Woods and will help when we have to fight those development battles!