

Nature Notes

Bugbrooke Garden Birdwatch 2012

Thank you to everyone who participated this year. We had 52 sets of results including some from other villages including Farthingstone, Litchborough, Harpole, Dalscote, Pattishall, and Astcote. In all 33 different species were seen and in the gardens there was a range of 2 - 16 species, with an average for each garden of almost 9. The top 3 when measured by numbers seen, remains the same as last year being, 1.house sparrow, 2.starling, 3.blackbird. However there has been a big change in the top 3 when measured by the most commonly seen in gardens. The blackbird continues to be the most likely bird in your garden, but at number 2, the woodpigeon has moved from 5th place, and the house sparrow is now third rising from 6th place. The robin has dropped from second to fourth and the blue tit from third to fifth.

Many people were disappointed at the numbers of birds they saw, and the general feeling was that there were fewer birds about, but this isn't reflected in the numbers. I saw fewer species this year than last, but a week later when the snow arrived, the long tailed tits, dunnocks, goldfinches, a wren and a song thrush all returned. Green woodpeckers were noticed during that week in a few gardens too. Possibly, with the mild winter there has been enough to eat in the hedgerows and the birds weren't dependent upon gardens. The gardens where 16 species were seen were both outside the village, in Dalscote and Litchborough. Being smaller villages they are probably closer to open countryside, but where gardens are on the edge of Bugbrooke, 13 or 14 species were recorded, Homestead being a hotspot. Proximity to hedgerows appears to be significant.

The woodpigeon is increasing at a tremendous rate. It has been a trend since the 1970s when there was an expansion of intensive arable farming and especially the cultivation of oilseed rape. They breed 3 times a year and have 2 eggs at a time. Unless a cat is very lucky, cats do not provide a threat to them as they are too big. Foxes will take them and it has been known for a female sparrowhawk to tackle one, but otherwise it has few natural predators. It seems that the trend is likely to continue.

The full results are available to be seen in the window at Petstop and online at www.bugbrookelink.co.uk/naturenotes If you missed the Birdwatch this year and would like to take part next year, let me know and I will remind you in January.

Recent sightings: I continue to have messages from people seeing a red kite around the village. Church Lane and the land behind the Sunday School is a good place to see it, and there have been reports around Birds Hill too, but for a bird of that size and power, the distance between the two is insignificant. Look out for a buzzard sized bird, but with a definite fork in its tail. If you are close enough its grey head is distinctive. The little egrets also provoke interest and are regularly seen in and around the brook. Don't just look on the ground though, as they also perch in trees. Bob Stickings from Laddermakers Yard has sent us a super picture so that you know what you are looking for.

Look out for hedgehogs. "Hedgehogs are declining and urgently need your help". To find out how you can help go to www.hedgehogstreet.org where you can take part in a national survey. There are details of food you can put out for them and the kind of habitat they need in your garden to thrive.

Please keep letting me know if you see anything that you think is of interest. If you can get a 'photo, all the better, and you can send it to feedback@bugbrookelink.co.uk Don't worry that you don't know what you have seen, or that you don't know whether it is unusual.

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