

Nature Notes

Bugbrooke Birdwatch 30-31 January

Thank you to everyone who took part and those who encouraged others to do so, and to Allen at Petstop who helped by distributing tally forms. I would have been pleased with 10 sets of results but received 18, and it is clear that birdlife in Bugbrooke is diverse and healthy. People who used the form from Petstop were asked to list birds that they often see but did not during the hour they watched, and counting all of them there were 40 species. Of the species actually seen there were 31. Every garden had Blackbirds and most had Blue Tits and Robins.

Amongst the more unusual species were Grey Wagtail, Blackcap, Bullfinch and Goldcrest. Grey Wagtails (not to be confused with the commoner black, grey and white Pied Wagtail) were seen in three gardens. Some are winter migrants from Europe but many are residential, breeding close to fast-flowing water where insects are abundant. It seems a shame that such a colourful bird with its bright yellow and grey plumage should be called a Grey Wagtail, but it distinguishes it from the Yellow Wagtail which is a summer visitor and may be seen locally.

Most gardens had a few House Sparrows but some had too many to count, so that they were by far the most numerous species overall. The numbers vary locally, so that for example large numbers of Greenfinch and House Sparrow were recorded in one place whereas only 100 yards away there were very few. It seems that small birds have a small range and keep to where they know they will find food so to avoid using energy looking elsewhere. It underlines the need to be reliable about restocking feeders when the winter nights are long and a quick feed is essential to restore the body weight lost overnight. Also, if you want to attract birds to your garden, you need to establish your garden as a feeding station early in the season so that they know about it when times get tough.

Birds seen: Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Bullfinch, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Dunnock, Starling, Collared Dove, Wood Pigeon, Wren, Pied Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Goldcrest, Jackdaw, Rook, Crow, Magpie, Mistle Thrush, Blackcap, Black headed Gull, Moorhen, Pheasant

Birds seen recently but not during the birdwatch: Green Woodpecker, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch, Heron, Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Redwing and Fieldfare

Recently sighted: Allen Dale has had Siskins and a Reed Bunting coming to his bird table in Butts Hill Crescent, and he has heard of others who have too. The Reed Bunting is a wetland bird which has increasingly come under pressure from its loss of habitat, but has adapted to living and breeding in oilseed-rape and cereal fields. A hard winter has probably made it search further afield and it has found a good food supply in gardens. Don't assume that all LBJs (little brown jobs) around the feeders are sparrows!

During the next couple of months the summer migrants will be returning. Please let me know when and where, in and around Bugbrooke, you first see or hear:

- Cuckoo, House Martins, Swallows, Swifts
- Other migrants such as Yellow Wagtail, Spotted Flycatcher and Willow Warbler.

Contact me on 832125. If you would like the full details of the Birdwatch visit www.bugbrookelink.co.uk/naturenotes or 'phone me for a print-out. If you would like to be reminded about next year's birdwatch, also get in touch and I shall add your name to the list.



Female Blackcap, seen in Browns Yard during the birdwatch, and regularly ever since.



Grey Wagtail, photograph published by kind permission of Cliff Young, a freelance photographer in Leamington Spa.



Reed Bunting, seen during February in Butts Hill Crescent by Allen Dale.