



December 2024 –

Garden Bird Watch this month 27th December to 3rd January 2025

December is always the hardest month to put a wildlife *Newsletter* together fuelled by a combination of dark windy days and in December 2024 Storm Darragh, which although we had wild, wet windy days, the sea was unbelievably calm and flat on the Saturday morning. I had hoped to go out for some storm photographs but this did not happen.

In November, a number of residents reported smallish flocks of starlings moving west towards the reed beds of Lodmoor RSPB. Hence, Carol managed this dusk photograph of this murmuration of starlings looking south from Oakbury Drive. They must have travelled from quite an area.

Garden Bird Watch:

Thank you everybody getting your lists to me before I went to Sidmouth for a short break. We had responses from 15 people recording 35 species raising 210 records averaging 14 species per list. The thrushes are back. Everybody had blackbird, two people reported song thrush, one reported mistle thrush and Rita observed a solitary redwing, which often flock on the edge of Came wood. Amazingly, two very late reports of house martin. I bet they do not make the usual wintering ground. House sparrow numbers are worryingly low. Just one tawny owl.

Greenfinch are hanging on in low numbers but very few chaffinches. Plenty of long tailed-tits. Blackcaps favour gardens with feed but no chiffchaff. One grey wagtail on Brookmead.

Our records for house martin and swallows for the season showed a significant reduction against 2023.



Traditionally **mistletoe** is found in orchards on apple. It does not have to be and here in Sutton Poyntz and Preston it is increasing. This false acacia, at the corner of Puddledock Lane and Seven acres is typical. However, the poplars on the south east side of Puddledock Lane it is also increasing. It is also found on ash, hawthorn and field maple here. Elsewhere, it is often seen on lime. At one time it was considered that seed was spread by mistle thrush alone, but it is now considered that blackcap is also involved. Dependent on the trees for water but it is green and photosynthesise.

I have apparently been producing these *Newsletters* since August 2010. Many are available on the Sutton Poyntz Website. However, we need to keep it topical with both regular contributors sending their bird lists and other anecdotal information. We need to keep looking as Dave did finding **harvest mouse** nests both in the new hedge along millennium walk and in the Water Works reed bed.

Occasionally photographs turn up from people who do not contribute regularly. Those residents with garden ponds might let us know about frogs, toads and newts. One former member dug a garden pond and we were soon rewarded with dragonfly sightings. These all help. Hedgehogs are another species of concern.

With a Government keen on building in the green belt, we need to know what we are may lose. Having spent most of my life living and working in South Yorkshire I know how precious the Dorset countryside is on a National basis. When living there, I certainly surveyed and reported on most of the better countryside. Returning there in 2024, it was disappointing to see what had been lost.

For those of you who have contributed from the start **Thank you**. For those of you who have joined us recently **Thank you**. **Please spread the word new contributors are always welcome**.

Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

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