



Garden Bird Watch this month 26th January to 1st February 2025

For those of you who take the *Dorset Echo* this sunset picture taken at the junction of Puddledock Lane is a little tame to those taken looking at the sea and in more open landscapes. There have been some excellent photographs of Dorset's sunrises and sunsets from right across the County, published recently. I should get out more, but do not like driving back in the dark. A sign of my ever-increasing years.

December/ January is a difficult time to highlight local wildlife. There is some but. it takes finding and one does not always have a camera ready. However,



A **star pinkgill** *Entoloma conferendum* found in grassland under ash at the junction of Littlemoor Road and Combe Valley Road, where in the past we have seen two species of waxcaps. Possibly a small area of old grassland transplanted when the road junction was made. Photo John Newbould



Scarlet elf cups *Sarcoscypha austriaca* var. *austriaca*. Discomycetes now known as Ascomycetes or cup fungi, found on dead wood in wet humid places, such as scarlet elf-cups and truffles, the latter forming under-ground, which may be found year-round The scarlet elf caps found here in Waterworks woods Photo Dave Emery

New Year Plant Hunt.

The leading Botanical – wild flowers, Recording Society BSBI.org organises a New Year Plant Hunt. The rules are fairly simple. The plant must be in flower *i.e.* stamens present. Grasses allowed. Ferns and mosses not. Plants should be recorded preferably in a 1km square in a three-hour period between 29th December and 1st January. One can take a rest.



So, during that period, I wandered around the streets of Sutton Poyntz and Preston, looked around the weeds in my garden and came up with 24 species of which, winter heliotrope is the most distinctive. Nationally, 647 species were recorded with daisy, dandelion and groundsel being the most common. Around 48% of the plants were flowering later than expected and around 25% earlier than expected. The rarest of my plants appeared in my garden under my study window about five years ago; This is white ramping fumitory *Fumaria capreolata* subsp, *babingtonii*. The identification was confirmed by the Dorset VC9 County Recorder Robin Walls. Some miserable looking flowers appear in late November, whilst the plant starts covering a lot of ground and then continues flowering to a climax in May. Needless to say, the recording app was not happy with this one.

Insects



The herald moth found in Jon and Sue's attic just before Christmas. This is a moth, which hibernates in a shed; and other dark places to overwinter before emerging to our light traps on suitable nights in April.



German wasp *Vespula germanica*. This turned up on my study window on 23rd December potted and taken outside to photograph. Initially, I wondered about a nomad bee but the bees do not have dots on the thorax. It would have been helpful to have a photograph of the face to aid identification.

Birds

Eleven people responded to Garden Bird Watch. There should have been twelve as I failed to add my figures. The outstanding thing seems to be that herring gulls, at least here, seem to have recovered from avian flu and are using habitation to find food. There are good numbers of common birds such as robin and long-tailed tits but generally house sparrow seems to be in decline. Three records of small numbers of fieldfare and redwing, with the latter not present as I drive past the barrows adjacent to Came Wood. It is also good to see five people recording song thrush and everybody seeing blackbirds, supplemented by birds coming over from the continent. There were good numbers of blackbird as I drove past the Whitcombe stables. I also saw one grey wagtail by the Rectory on the Weir.

The annual list looks quite impressive with 53 species recorded in 2024. Missing barn owl, which Anthea and I saw one autumn morning near Broadmayne on Chalky Road; brambling not seen for many years and redstart – a rare visitor here. What I am not getting from anybody is casual records from the wider countryside of Sutton Poyntz. Of old people would tell us about the occasional hobby following the swallows and martins. How are skylark doing on the hill and downs? Some of the missing data reflects the age of group members. I am now not so sure footed that I will wander up the hill towards Margaret's Seat.

To all Garden Bird Watchers - thank you for your observations in 2024. Keep up the good work and see if you can recruit a new younger member or two.

A cautionary tale



Colin and I went to Lodmoor last week together with our friend David who joins us on National Trust expeditions. David had done his research to find that somebody had posted a blue-winged teal *Anas discors* in the shallows along the western footpath on a website. This did not seem to be about.

Needless to say, the big lens were out in force. Anyway, we came across number of teal *Anas crecca*. The big lens then produced their mobile phones saying we were looking at green-winged teal *Anas crecca*. Yes, using an American app. According to Collins that English name for green winged teal is given the scientific name *Anas carolinensis*.

It just needed the scientists to make sure the correct species was booked. In the UK, there are two good sources of names. The National Biodiversity Atlas www.nbn.org/atlas and also the data base used by the statutory agencies operated by the National Biological Records Centre -iRecord www.brc.ac.uk/iRecord . This data set lists 17 species of teal including a scientific name for green-winged teal *Anas carolinensis*. Hopefully, the verification system will sort out any posted records using the American name. In addition, *Collins Bird Guide* second edition by Svensson, Mullaney and Zetterstrom has the correct scientific name against common teal. David had a copy in his hand.