



**Wildlife Walk** – 4<sup>th</sup> April 2014 when we will walk to the Ridgeway past Margaret's Seat for spring birds. Meet at the Mission Hall at 9.00a.m. This walk is to contribute to a Dorset ANOB/ FWAG project looking at farmland birds on the ridge between Eggardon Hill and Poxwell. Low cloud and cold meant this walk was cancelled in March.

**The violet oil beetle**

Dorothy Emblem reported finding four oil beetles in her garden during the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of March. Her garden is ideal with the scattered trees forming a woodland edge habitat, but they are also found on unimproved grasslands, which again are present in her garden edge. Buglife reports that lesser celandine and dandelion are considered to be the preferred food plant, but adults also feed on soft grasses and cleavers.

Whilst on the subject of beetles, watch out for the bloody nose-beetle. (illustrated below) This beetle feeds on bedstraws and turns up in moth traps until May time. Its name derives from its' ability to release a drop of red fluid from its mouth when alarmed. This is off putting to birds.

The warm weather during the second week of March also meant good numbers of butterflies with reports of peacock, small tortoiseshell, brimstone and small white. There have also been a number of buff-tailed bumblebees around and both harlequin and 7 spot-Ladybird.

**Garden Bird Watch February 2014.**

We saw 39 species in our gardens this month compared with 35 in January. Quiet amazingly, nobody reported goldcrest, yet it is a bird, which keeps turning up in copses and hedges on my travels around Dorset. Nine gardens reported green woodpecker, which I hear constantly around Puddledock Lane with Janet Craig sending a photograph of two displaying in long grass. Just two people reported song thrush with the thrush family being extremely disappointing this winter. Sue and John Campbell have provided their Wessex Water walk list with stonechat at two stopping places. They also spotted yellowhammers at three places, as did four people in their gardens. On our travels around Dorset, we have occasionally stopped for 15 minutes or so by a warm hedge or copse, which has produced a good dozen or so species.

Towards the end of March start watching out for the African migrants martins and swallows with few birds coming through Portland as I write. Also start watching for signs of breeding. Blue tits appear to be dashing to and fro in pairs for example.

**February weather:**

Anthea reported that we had 540mm of rain in February compared with 141.8mm of rain in 2013. The St Valentine's day storms left many trees down on local roads.



Carrion Crow © Janet Craig



Fox © Jack Winspar



Bloody nose-beetle © John Newbould



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