



Sutton Poyntz Biodiversity News



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April 2019 Garden Bird Watch this month 23rd – 30rd April, 2019

Rare migrant in Sutton Poyntz Garden



© Pat Dodge – Hawfinch Sutton Poyntz April 2019

It pays to keep your eyes peeled whilst gardening. Derek and Pat Dodge saw this visitor on their lawn whilst gardening and Pat cleverly brought her camera into play to photograph this **hawfinch**. Described in Green's *Birds of Dorset* (2004) as a very rare winter visitor to Dorset, scarce passage migrant They have been known to breed, mostly in the east of the County. A really stunning observation, which none of the experts have objected to.

Fifteen people sent back bird returns with 250 records of 28 species. Swallows and Martins were notable by their absence, although some had been reported passing through Portland Bird Observatory. Certainly, nearer Easter swallows have been reported resting up on the wires along Puddledock Lane. Two people, from the top of Plaisters Lane reported six or seven yellowhammer in the garden, with three reports of song thrush and seven reports of starling, which have been feeding on my lawn with blackbirds. Interesting how aggressive male blackbirds are in the garden with two regularly fighting it out in my garden. Green woodpecker has been very noising during the month with reports from nine gardens. Dave E reported garden warbler, which is not on our list with many people reporting chiffchaff and blackcap.

Jon C continues to record on Wessex Water land including bullfinch, which evaded garden bird watch. Plenty of stonechat but no linnet and six meadow pipet and a single skylark also present.

Jon also reported on two small bunches of mistletoe on rowan on Old Bincombe Lane. This is an interesting parasitic species mostly on apple and lime in Dorset but I have also seen it on field maple and false acacia on Seven Acres. The plant has had an interesting history during my twenty years in Sutton Poyntz, appearing on various apple trees in small orchards, which have disappeared as houses have been built on the sites. In one garden,

our correspondent used to report mistle thrush and low and behold their apple trees developed large bunches of mistletoe to the extent that one tree died. The berries reputed stick to the bird's beak and the action of using a small branch or twig to remove the sticky mess results in bunches of mistletoe.

The wildflower season is getting underway.

In the waterworks streams there are bunches of marsh marigolds in flower, whilst on damp wet muddy ground there opposite-leaved golden saxifrage has a strong hold. One plant, which seems to have increased this year in coastal districts is the umbellifer Alexanders, with many plants standing proud. There are plenty of three-cornered leaks around villages and bluebells are making a good show. Bullace and blackthorn are now fading with hawthorn just coming into flower on Puddledock Lane.



Butterflies

are appearing more regularly with brimstone, still around, Colin reported eight peacock above the waterworks. Orange-tip (see left) just emerging here resting on its favoured host plant cuckoo flower. Small tortoiseshell appears to be scarce again this year and speckled wood are found in shady places.

Nights have been quite cold and we have not moth trapped much this year. Jon has had the usual Hewbrew character etc.

© D. Leigh

It has been a good year for bee flies. The one with the long proboscis. Plenty of dark-edged bee fly *Bombylius major* with rather less of the dotted bee-fly *B. discolor* (the one with a touch of orange). I would guess at the ratio of ten of the former to one of the latter. On warm days I have noted the tree bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum* finding cavities in stone walls.