



Garden Bird Watch this month 18th – 24th February 2024

Another month of mixed soggy weather interspersed with quite warm sunny days such as Monday 12th February when at midday honey bees were busy pollinating crocuses in swarms in one garden on Sutton Road. Over the weekend two butterflies were recorded in sunshine both overwintering a peacock and a red admiral.



On 12th I went for a look in Veteran Wood, mainly to check out prospects for another project that has been directed my way – more later. I was checking out harts-tongue *Asplenium (Phyllitis) scolopendrium* fern for the larval case of a micro-moth, which I did not find but a cream-spot ladybird was sheltering underneath. These need checking carefully as it is easy to be confused with an orange ladybird, which has yellow markings on its head.

The leaf-mine on the banner photograph I have only seen once before is formed by a fly *Chromatomyia scolopendrium*.

I have been asked to contribute some notes on Bryophytes (mosses and liverworts), lichens and fungi for the Sutton Poyntz website. For technical reasons, this work needs to be short so the Bryophytes are done in two pages and the lichens in one. The fungi are so complicated I need five pages, so that has not happened. Next, I was asked for lists of species: Lichens was relatively easy as three of us do lichens in winter, all-be-it on a simple scale. Mosses and liverworts are much harder and only John so in addition to the website this is *Marchantia polymorpha* subsp, *ruderalis* between paving slabs.



In the wood itself, there is an occasional lesser celandine in flower. Bluebells and ransoms are beginning to show their leaves and of course there are plenty of hazel catkins. I have only identified one liverwort from the streamside in the wood that was the great scented liverwort *Conocephalum conicum*. I have a few samples to sort out.

There are plenty of snowdrops out but one needs to look carefully to see a few flowers of winter aconite at the corner of Puddledock Lane.

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The raw numbers: we had responses from 15 people and a few people mentioned the pond, so there is a separate column. A total of 38 species from 250 records with an average of 15 species per garden. We do things slightly differently to the BTO Garden Bird Watch, which only records birds using the garden. Incidentally the **RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch is 24th-26th January** this year as ours ends.

I have some new hearing aids, so unless the wind is blowing a gale, I can hear great tits, robins, chiffchaff, song thrush etc. I did walk up Sutton Road on Shrove Tuesday around 7.15pm. I did not hear any tawny owls but three people did. Rita tells me that song thrush is doing well on Puddledock Lane, but not many records for green woodpecker, which I usually hear from the paddocks there at this time of the year. Herring Gulls appear to be recovering from Avian flu with increased numbers and I saw at least five juveniles in the Pavillion car park earlier in the week.

What has been poor this year are flocks of redwings, with just two sightings to the north of the village in early January. Fieldfare have only been individuals despite all the apples left around. There seems to be plenty of blackbirds in the hedgerows.

Has anybody seen tadpoles in their garden ponds?