



Celebrating fifteen years of Garden Bird Watch 21st to 27th April 2024.

The banner photograph this month is navelwort *Umbilicus rupestris* just coming into flower. It is really a west country plant seen in most places in a line from the Mersey to the Hamble but also in eastern England in coastal areas. It does really like acidic conditions so those who holiday in the Lake District are certainly likely to see it. However, in Sutton Poyntz, it defies the general and is found on calcareous walls. I have also seen it on the Golden Cap estate on hedge banks of soil. Some of the other plants seen on our walls are ferns such as rustyback *Asplenium ceterach* and black spleenwort *Asplenium adianitum nigrum* but both take some looking for.



Ivy-leaved toadflax



Mexican fleabane

These two plants are, in my opinion, a menace. Both seem difficult to eradicate despite vigorous scraping off the walls. I have actually seen Mexican fleabane offered for sale in a National charity sales area for £8. Buyer beware, once established they take some eradicating.

Despite another month of excess rain with Storm Nelson depositing 28mm on the 28th and a further 12mm on the 29th wild flowers seem to be coming out early bulbous buttercup was in flower mid-March normally April and meadow buttercup out 4th April and hawthorn in flower 5th April by the Weymouth Bay bus stop normally late April/May. The blackthorn group of *Prunus* species started about the usual time in mid-March with cherry plum, quickly followed by blackthorn, which did not seem to last and then greengage *Prunus domestica*. The bank at the south end of Sutton Road is covered with three cornered-leak *Allium paradoxum*, which is another plant once established is difficult to clear. It is well established on the wonderful earthen hedge banks in west Cornwall but fortunately quickly dies back.

Garden Bird Watch March 2024



I received 16 reports of birds in your gardens, listing 39 species at an average of 15 per report generating 244 records including four species of chaffinch. Thank you to the person, who took this photograph. I am sorry I do not seem to have a note. Bird photographs are scarce and particularly welcome to illustrate the report. Three records of song thrush with birds active on Old Bincombe Lane and Puddledock Lane. We had our first yellowhammer of the year from Old Granary Close. If you open the door or a window in the evening listenout for tawny owl, only two reports.

Green woodpecker numbers look down possibly reflecting a dry spring last year and few invertebrates in lawns. It was good to see five greenfinch records. It will soon be time to plant sunflower seeds to see if we can help Penny's efforts last year, which brought greenfinch to our area of the village in the autumn.

I have an impression, walking round that both blue and great tits, together with goldfinch seem to be doing well this year. House sparrow seems to be still in decline and missing from places where I have traditionally seen and heard them in the past. Jon and Sue reported swallows over Lodmoor but comment that the strong winds seem to be holding migration back with few reports of birds such as wheatear. I have just checked a recent list from Cogden, which reflects this trend.

Butterflies etc.

Sue and Jon managed the first of our Butterfly conservation transect walks on 1st April, with four species all in the first three western sectors. Peacock, speckled wood, brimstone and one red admiral was their collection. I have had a few small white on sunny days in the garden. Sue and Jon's garden is quite sheltered from winds and they have moth trapped with a small number of early regulars such as clouded drab.

Plenty of small ants on sunny days in my garden plus a few bumble bees and a couple of mining bees but little else. Dave reported an unidentified bee-fly last weekend.