



## Garden Bird Watch 21<sup>st</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Those of us who are members of the British Trust for Ornithology receive a monthly update by email as well as our regular printed *Newsletter* three times a year. This week, Professor Juliet Vickery – the Chief Executive, in a video podcast told us that using the data in BTO's servers there are 73 million less birds contributing to the dawn chorus. Dawn chorus day this year was 7<sup>th</sup> May and we contributed a recording of nightingale, all-be-it later than dawn heard three times on Church Road Preston around that time. A few of us have been privileged to have visited both Dancing Ledge part of the Purbeck National Trust Estate and a farm at West Bexington also owned by the National trust where skylark song and numbers was brilliant. A recording attached.

As a nation we are in a quandary about new houses as increasingly as at Poundbury there is less and less space for a garden with trees and bushes, which attract birds. Every morning, I walk the suburban streets of Sutton Poyntz and Preston early and come across less and less house sparrows so the numbers seen by Dave near the Waterworks are excellent. To quote the Lawson Report of ten years ago "*we must make space for nature*". So our lists and reports of birds are brilliant.

In addition to our regular lists, Dave was amazed to have a reed warbler resting in his garden chirping away for around 24 hours earlier in the month. Ros was away for the April count but has reported her house martins are back nesting on Sutton Park Lawns, whilst Rita was pleased to see three swifts over the Puddledocks from 18<sup>th</sup> May. Dave has for the past few months used a motion sensor camera to watch the wildlife in the Waterworks meadows. The most recent one he placed near ground level and detected a bank vole, which was not picked up in the April Longworth trapping series where we only had wood mouse. Interestingly, the camera also picks up sound and about the time he saw reed warbler in his garden he picked up its song in the reed beds for the first time as well as a Cetti's warbler, which can be heard in the day. Bird song is a skill, I have never learned and apart from a few birds such as Cetti's warbler and skylark I struggle to pick up bird song.



Interestingly, people tell me they are seeing less birds and it is probable that there are a number of factors, which the scientists will tell us when all the 2022 data has been analysed. What I do know is that in the second half of 2022 and carrying on into 2023, insect numbers seem well down and these provide food for many birds and bats. The long hot dry summer of 2023 must have made life difficult for many wild animals. We still do not know how badly avian flu has affected the smaller wild birds again awaiting the data scientists from BTO.

**Chaffinch** supplied by Janet Craig.

We had contributions from 14 people with 203 records of 38 species plus the reed warbler not in our list. House sparrow in 11 reports, song thrush in three reports plus I heard one on Puddledock Lane, twice, three reports of house martin and swallows, which only seem present in low numbers occasionally when out. We do not often have a record of whitethroat in the garden – this one from Old Granary Close.

### Butterflies and moths:



Orange tip – John

We have managed the Butterfly Conservation standard Pollard walks for the first six weeks. The numbers are dire with peacock being the most consistent. However, last week three reports of green hairstreak from round the waterworks and two reports of dingy skipper from the calcareous grassland. Common blue and holly blues but so far no Adonis blue.

Moth trapping has been hopeless with either clear skies or cold north easterly winds, as now as I write. Sue and Jon had a great prominent on one pretty poor night. They also recorded an early golden-winged dragonfly above the waterworks last week.

Sue and Jon reported over 50 spikes of early purple orchid amongst the gorse on West Hill SY706845. There is a good display of yellow flag iris on the pond and in the River Jordan on Sutton Road. Two plants of caper spurge have appeared in my garden over winter along with some of the biggest common sow thistles I have ever seen.

The bank between Wimslow Road and Verlands has many yellow hawkweeds. There are over 400 British Species and I have never managed to key out, which this one is. Horseshoe vetch is now in flower on the east side of Plaisters Lane together with a few mouse-eared hawkweed.

