



### Garden Bird Watch this month from 26<sup>th</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.

We welcome three new members to our team this month with a fourth member taking part this month for the first time. This is the best bit of recruitment we have had for some time, especially as we have lost a few people from the north end of Plaisters Lane and we would still be very happy for someone else to join us especially if they are on the north side of the road looking onto West Hill.

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> April sees the first day of the Butterfly Conservation Standard walks, which a small group of us do starting from Wyndings, round by the Beacon to the Waterworks, then return to the village via the Waterworks boundary and down East Hill. We had reasonable results last year but with the heat and lack of rain from July to September there were few flowers to pollinate and hence few butterflies and also moths. These walks have been running for over 40 years and a major source of information on the Nation's butterflies. Amongst our members, just one person reported some peacock butterflies on a warm sunny day on Old Granary Close during the last week of February, whilst last week Rita and Colin saw their first brimstone butterfly at the National Trust's Turnworth Common.



Wildflowers appear to be flowering much later in 2023, reflecting the hard frosts we have had since mid-December. The lesser celandine were photographed during the first week of March just a day or so after they were first seen in flower on our verges, where-as since I have lived here from 1999, I have seen them in flower on 5<sup>th</sup> January.

The three-cornered leek was photographed on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021, whereas the first flowering this year at the south end of Sutton Road was 12<sup>th</sup> March. Sweet violet and bulbous buttercup were in flower there by 1<sup>st</sup> March. Another flower, which for many years, I have seen in flower before Christmas is primrose, but in 2023 very few until just recently. Cherry plum *Prunus cerasifera* was in good form in hedgerows by mid-February with its cousin blackthorn *Prunus spinose* just starting to flower on March 18<sup>th</sup> on Lodmoor RSPB.

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We had results from 14 people who saw a total of 34 species, but as usual people living near more open countryside and fields had the best results, but please do not be deterred. Garden with trees also seem to do better because, even in winter there are insects busy cleaning up deleterious, which nature leaves behind. I have a gut feeling, that generally house sparrow numbers have dipped. I am

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seeing fewer as I walk around Sutton Poyntz and Preston in places where I would have seen double figures. Sometimes, this is due to routine maintenance where vegetation is cut back but in other places, such as my garden I wonder why.



The two top performers seen in every garden are blackbird and magpie, but although one of the few birds I can hear is a robin, only ten reports. Another bird, which appears to have dipped is green woodpecker with just three reports and again a bird I normally hear from the Puddledocks. Good spots include three reports of greenfinch, one report of the tiny goldcrest and only one song thrush. Dave reported the last of the redwings, prior to their spring migration north-east. Watch out for blackcap and chiffchaff increasing. If walking on the hill we are always pleased to hear about skylarks, yellowhammer, linnets and wheatear.

Finally always pleased to hear about frog spawn etc, slowworms under stones and perhaps, we will soon be getting out moth traps out.