

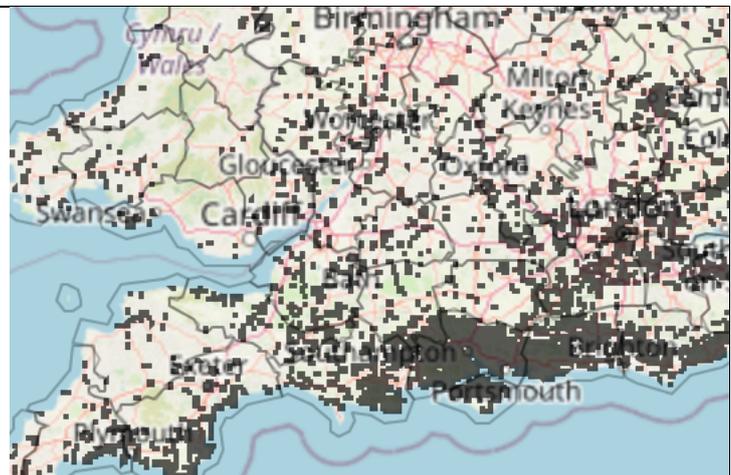
Sutton Poyntz
Biodiversity Group
December 2023 News



December Garden Bird Watch 27th December to 2nd January
We wish all members a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

In December, especially this year with extra rain and wind it is often very difficult to know what to write about. Liz and I have just been to Sidmouth and fortunately missed all the flooding in west Dorset and east Devon. Never-the-less most days, we had rain followed by sun then more rain.

As I was contemplating the content for this *Newsletter*, I met Rita and Colin, who reminded me that an ash tree in land to the south of Puddledock Lane had acquired mistletoe *Viscum album*, which was not present when we did the village mistletoe survey at the beginning of 2022. Two quite large plants and two younger plants, which is unusual on ash. (SY70478357). The ash actually appeared to be getting on for 1m diameter approaching truly ancient.



Whilst photographing the mistletoe, behind me were a number of plants of **butcher's broom** *Ruscus aculeatus*. Alongside the picture, I have placed the BSBI Atlas dot map at 2 kmsq resolution for the south of England where it is native. Typically found in woods. Here in Sutton Poyntz, these plants originated from the Waterworks north wood. However, you can see Dorset then Hampshire and into Sussex are strongholds. I never saw it when I lived in Yorkshire, but there are a few dots possibly introduced for winter berries.

Butterflies: Robin George, from Butterfly Conservation, tells me that Sue and Jon had the highest count for small tortoiseshell butterflies (13) in Dorset on October 3rd for 2023.

Garden Bird Watch

Fourteen reports came through ultimately. A total of 218 individual records with 37 species seen. No winter thrushes. However, one mistle thrush and two song thrush. I have only seen redwing once this season in mid-November at National Trust Ringmoor and Turnworth where around 200 passed through. I have only had one note for a single bird near the coast. One of the interesting happenings is that this season there has been a regular immuration of starlings at National Trust Cogden around dusk and a few of us have seen good numbers for here, especially in the valley bottom with Colin counting sixty on Puddledock Lane, whilst I keep looking at the poplars in Riley's garden. However, most summers they have fed on my lawn but not in 2023.

House sparrows seem to be taking a dive. Dave often reported 40 in the past but now 20 and we regularly had all garden bird watch reports with bird present but this time just eight reports and I only occasionally now see them in my garden. The greenfinch has eaten all the Brookmead sunflower seed heads, so no reports here. Three reports of red listed grey wagtail, which is good as it is in National decline. I am also not seeing the usual dawn movement of herring gulls inland from Weymouth Bay and Canada goose is now quite a rare sight.

Please send your garden bird watch records after 2nd January.

Waxcaps:

One of the most important surveys we do at this time of the year is to survey for waxcaps in unimproved, unploughed meadows: Amazingly, under an ash at the junction of Coombe Valley road and Littlemoor Road SY69682837



Snowy waxcap seen here two years ago



Slimy waxcap (Not to scale)

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