

## Thorndon Birdlife, February 2015

As I write we are in the midst of the coldest winter weather for two years, although so far we have had very little snow, none of which has settled. February, however, can be the coldest month of the winter...

Back in October I saw a covey of about a dozen grey partridges between Thorndon and Wetheringsett and what may well have been the same birds were to the south of The Street on 25th and 26th November. I was delighted to see these birds, eleven in total, as they are the first ones I've seen in this part of the village. If they are the same birds they're clearly ranging over quite a wide area and I hope they make it through the winter.



I was delighted to receive a report of about 80 golden plovers between Thorndon and the Wash just before Christmas, on 22nd December. It is possible that some of these birds will have been in the similar sized group that was between The Street and the Village Hall on 29th December 2013 and, like those birds, these ones didn't stick around. Perhaps we're a staging post for these birds on their way to winter somewhere else. If so, we can only hope that they'll call in on their way back to their breeding grounds in the spring, by which time they will have acquired their spectacular summer

plumage: spangled gold above and black and white beneath.

On 28th December I was pleased to see a green woodpecker fly up from the ground near Thorndon Hill. As it did so the most striking feature was the large, yellow rump patch and its markedly undulating flight. Green woodpeckers are always a delight to see, surely one of the most exotic looking British birds.



As soon as we pass the winter solstice the lengthening days prompt birds to start proclaiming their territories for the breeding season and the great spotted woodpecker that I heard drumming on 5th January was a reminder that we are now heading in the direction of the spring.



Kingfishers have been along the river and milder winter weather really helps them. If it gets really cold and the fresh water freezes they abandon their inland haunts and head for the coast, where they are equally at home fishing in salt water habitats.

I was very interested to receive a report from Briswell Green of a goldcrest that stunned itself by flying into a window pane. It was picked up and released once it had revived. The goldcrest is Europe's smallest bird and adults weigh just six and a half grams; the same as a ten pence piece. Just think about that for a moment, a 10p coin. Despite their tiny size, some of these birds in our gardens over the winter will have migrated here from Russia, crossing the North Sea in the process. I think that's pretty astonishing and so I'm always filled with admiration for these tiny, subtly beautiful and hyper-active birds whenever I see them. Who knows, perhaps the one at Briswell Green was here at the end of just such an epic journey. If so, the hand of kindness that enabled it to survive may have been instrumental in it being able to migrate back to its breeding grounds in the spring.



During February some of the early-nesting species will be singing, pairing up and getting ready for the breeding season. Mistle thrushes are among the earliest to start singing and will often start nesting in February. Listen out for their wistful song, especially on breezy days. The rooks will be returning to repair their nests and this year there is a county-wide survey of rookeries, so I'll be interested to hear if you've got them near you.

I am always pleased to receive reports of birds and other wildlife of interest in Thorndon, Rishangles, Hestley Green and Braiseworth.