

Thorndon Birdlife, April 2015

As I write, just before the Spring Equinox and an almost total eclipse of the Sun, the snowdrops are going over and lesser celandines, primroses and the first daffodils are coming into flower. Migration is very much in evidence and I've seen groups of fieldfares and redwings on the move in the last week, all heading north to their breeding grounds. Both breed in Scandinavia and the far north-east of Europe (and into Asia) but redwings also breed in Iceland and fieldfares also breed in central and eastern Europe, so, wherever the ones I've seen are off to, they've got quite a journey ahead of them.



Fieldfare

I also saw about 80 fieldfares in trees and fields at the end of the Clint Road in the first half of February and I was very pleased to be able to enjoy them because there haven't been that many around over the rest of the winter.

Also in the first half of February I was surprised to see an immature grey heron in a field by the Thwaite Road. This bird was also seen by

another resident, who was kind enough to

'phone me about it. Quite why this bird was on the ground, in a roadside field, I'm not sure. It is likely to have been looking for food because they tend to roost in trees, where they are safe from predators, but both times I saw it, it was standing in the same place, motionless.

By the end of February, song thrush, robin and chaffinch were all singing along The Street and as April progresses the intensity of bird song will increase as males proclaim their territories and attract mates.



Grey heron



Blackcap

Also in April, as our winter visitors continue to depart for their breeding grounds, our summer visitors will be arriving from their wintering grounds in southern Europe and Africa. The more obvious ones to look out and listen for are the blackcap, whose loud, sweet song is a sure sign that spring is here, and the swallow, the first of which should be back with us by the middle of the month.

By the end of April our house martins should be back and this year and next year they are the subject of a study by the BTO (British Trust for Ornithology). If you have house martins nesting on your home or outbuildings please let me know so that our birds can be included in this survey. Surprisingly, although they are one of our most familiar birds, the house martin's precise wintering grounds remain a mystery.

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

Stephen Dean