

## Thorndon Birdlife, February 2017

As I write, we are coming to the end of a prolonged period of very cold weather. Despite the fact that February can be the harshest month of the winter, there are already signs of Spring in the air. On 21st January I noticed the first buds appearing on the hazel trees in my garden and during February their catkins will form, which, along with the emergence of snowdrops, is the essence of late winter plantlife.



Greater Spotted Woodpecker

On 22nd January I heard two great spotted woodpeckers drumming - which they will actually start as soon as we have passed the Winter

solstice - and saw one of them flying off in the direction of the other, and the same day I was delighted to see several lapwings in the fields along the Clint Road.

I was pleased to receive a report of meadow pipits on the set-aside. These are the archetypal 'little brown job' in that they are small (about the size of



Meadow Pipit

a sparrow), with a brown head, back - which is streaked darker - and wings and they have pale underparts with dark streaks. Meadow pipits have a fine bill, like a robin, which indicates that they are primarily insectivorous, and they spend most of their time on the ground.

When disturbed they fly up, showing their dark brown tail with bright white outer tail feathers and they call a thin "iss-iss-iss". Sometimes they will land on an overhead wire, waiting until it is safe to drop back down onto the ground, and when they are perched it is possible to see that their hind claws are long and curved.

There have been good numbers of waxwings seen in Suffolk this winter, with groups seen in the east and the west of the county, so there is no reason why some shouldn't turn up here. Probably one of our most attractive winter visitors, look out for a dumpy, starling-sized bird with a crest. Their bodies are a delicate shade of greyish brown (with a slightly pinkish tinge) and they have striking yellow, white and



Lapwing



Waxwing

red markings on their black wings, a black throat and eye mask and a grey rump and tail with a broad yellow band at the tip. Their underparts are a little paler than their upperparts and they have a deep red colour under the tail. Waxwings tend to be found in small flocks feeding on berries (they are especially fond of rowan).

In February look out, too, for starlings displaying on wires and TV aerials, with outstretched wings flicking slowly like a clockwork toy as they sing. Listen out for the wistful, blackbird-like song of the mistle thrush, which is one of our earliest nesting birds.

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

Stephen Dean    678093