

Thorndon Birdlife, July and August 2017

As I write, 22nd June, I've just heard and seen a black-headed gull, the first evidence of birds dispersing from their breeding areas at the end of the breeding season. As the summer progresses we'll see increasing numbers of gulls, especially once fields have been harvested and they have open areas in which to loaf and feed.

I received a further report of a spotted flycatcher along the High Street on 23rd May and I hope that insectivorous birds will have done well in the hot and dry weather we had in the run-up to the Summer Solstice. I saw a single red admiral butterfly on 28th May and on 21st June the *Buddleia* in my garden had its first flowers so I hope I'll see more bees and butterflies over the rest of the summer.

There was plenty of bird song to be heard in the middle of June, some of which will be attributable to those birds having their second brood of young. On 18th I heard a chiffchaff at Rishangles and in Thorndon, as well as Blackcap and Wren singing along The Street, I heard a turtle dove purring near The Oaks.

I have been pleased to see and hear a singing male greenfinch along The Street because their numbers are much reduced at the moment. Their exuberant twittering song, delivered in their "butterfly" display flight, with slow wing beats, is very distinctive. I've also seen and heard singing goldfinch.

On 13th June I saw one of my favourite moths, the magpie moth, which has white wings with black spots and an orange body. It's not a particularly big moth but it is very distinctive, its warning colours a signal to potential predators not to eat it. On the same day I had a lovely view of a tawny owl as it flew across the High Street near the Village Hall and landed on a telegraph pole, where it perched, looking at me looking at it.

On 16th and 18 June I saw a green woodpecker that was uttering a rather unusual call, a repeated, single "chip" note that never developed into the typical laughing "yaffle" and I wonder if this was a contact call to nearby young.

I've seen the hedgehog in my garden a couple of times feeding on the meal worms that I put out and drinking from the tray of water that I provide for it. It's a good size and seems pretty sprightly.

With the very warm weather coming up from the Continent I wondered whether I would see a hummingbird hawk moth and one duly arrived on 19th June, when it was feeding on *Valerian* flowers. It is remarkable that these insects fly here from Southern Europe and North Africa and they are always a rather exotic joy to see.

The blackbirds nesting in my garden fledged three young on 21st June and they, too, are very keen on the mealworms I put out. It was interesting to see just how cautious the female was when visiting the nest to feed the young and to hear her trying to encourage them to leave the nest with quiet "chook" calls.

As I always say at this time of year, do enjoy the swifts that are flying around the village because they'll be off, back to Africa, at the beginning of August and they will not land until they return next May - amazing!

During July and August do continue to feed the birds in your garden and make sure they've got water to drink and bathe in. As we get towards the end of the summer you should start to see robins again as they become less shy once they've completed their post-breeding moult.

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

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