



Thorndon Birdlife

March 2018



If we get a settled, mild and sunny spell in mid-February it often feels as though Spring is just around the corner, and in ornithological terms it is, as March sees the start of the birding (as well as meteorological) Spring. The weather over the weekend of 17th/18th February was absolutely lovely and I saw about a hundred fieldfares flying East at Thorndon Hill. If they were thinking of heading back to their breeding grounds in Eastern and Northern Europe they may well have to have a change of heart, as it looks as though the end of February and the beginning of March is going to be very cold, with a prolonged spell of Easterly winds.

There has been a wonderful display of snowdrops in the grounds of the Church, where I have looked recently to see whether we have any hawfinches. The reason I've looked there is that they have been recorded in several other Suffolk churchyards this Winter, following an unprecedented arrival of these birds from Europe. Several species of finches undertake these 'irruptive' mass migrations from Europe, including crossbills and redpolls, and it would be lovely to see a hawfinch in Thorndon. The hawfinch is a stocky finch, nearly the size of a starling, with a big, powerful bill. It is a rich brown on the back, chestnut on the head and buff below, with a white stripe in the wing and a white band at the end of the tail. After these periodic influxes from Europe hawfinches often stay to breed, so there's a chance we might yet see them here.

Our smallest bird, the goldcrest, is always a delight to see and I've received a couple of reports of them coming to bird tables in the village. During the Winter they often consort with other small birds in roving flocks, so it is not unusual to see them coming to feeders. Seeing them actually foraging for food on bird tables is less common.

In March, as the primroses and Millennium daffodils flower, we'll notice an increase in bird song as mates are sought and territories are established and birds get on with the all important business of nesting and raising their young. The songs of our resident species will be added to as the first of our summer visitors, chiffchaffs and blackcaps, arrive.

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

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