

Thorndon Birdlife, May 2018

I am writing this on the evening of the warmest April day since 1949 and it has been delightful to see a profusion of primroses and daffodils in the sunshine after the very cold weather at the beginning of the spring.

Although the cold weather in March has delayed the flowering of some of the hedgerow plants, the first sightings of some of our summer visitors have been surprisingly early. Both swallows and house martins were seen over The Street on 7th April and on 13th there were two house martins at a nesting site on the Thwaite Road, which is much earlier than I normally expect to see the first ones in the village.

During May the dawn chorus will reach its peak and as well as blue tits, blackbirds and robins, I have been very pleased to hear chaffinch and greenfinch singing along The Street. Learning bird song is something that many people find quite a challenge, but some birds' songs lend themselves to associations that help to remember them. The robin's song always reminds me of the squeaky wheel of a barrow being pushed, and when I hear the accelerating chatter with a terminal flourish of the chaffinch it is easy to visualise it accompanying a bowler running up to deliver the ball in a game of cricket.

Birds are getting on with the all important business of nest-building and I received a remarkable report (with photographs) of a pair of great tits trying to fill someone's post box with moss! The terms 'determined' and 'over-ambitious' sprang to mind when I saw the pictures.

There are lots of insects on the wing now, including bumble bees and lacewings, and I was delighted to see a brimstone butterfly on 14th April, although I haven't yet seen an orange-tip, which is usually the first butterfly I expect to see on the wing in April.

As April turns to May we should see the rest of our summer visitors arrive, with the swallows and house martins being joined by swifts. I hope, too, that by the end of the month turtle doves and spotted flycatchers will be back with us.

I hope to hear the call of the cuckoo (beware hearing just two of the three notes of the call of the collared dove), usually in the area of the set-aside and The Fen, at the beginning of May.

There will be a lot going on in May and I am always pleased to receive reports of birds and other wildlife in Thorndon, Rishangles, Hestley Green and Braiseworth.

Stephen Dean 678093