

## **Thorndon Birdlife, December 2019 and January 2020**

By December the autumn migration will be over and most birds will be where they need to be for the winter. If we get extremely cold weather, however, birds will be forced to move, with local birds heading to the estuaries or maybe further south or west, and birds from the Continent crossing the North Sea. These weather-related movements can provide the spectacle of visible migration during the day, which is always very exciting.

During the autumn a lot of birds have already arrived and it's worth bearing in mind that if you see a goldcrest in your garden this winter it may have come a very long way to be here. It's hard to imagine that Europe's smallest bird, weighing the same as a twenty-pence coin, can fly across the North Sea and I have heard of one this autumn that was caught by a licensed bird ringer on the coast that had been ringed in Russia. I find these feats of endurance and survival absolutely astonishing and very humbling.

I was very pleased to receive a report of a treecreeper in a garden along The Street and do look out for these birds as they often consort with roving flocks of blue tits, great tits and coal tits roaming restlessly around in their never ending search for food during the daylight hours. These flocks may also include goldcrests and nuthatches. The treecreeper is a remarkable bird to watch feeding as it works its way up a tree trunk, probing for insects and spiders in the bark with its long, thin bill, propping itself up with its rather stiff, woodpecker-like tail. Treecreepers are delicately marked brown and buff on the upperparts and strikingly white on the underparts and they can only climb upwards or along branches; when they get to the top they fly down to the base of another tree and start climbing, jerkily, up the trunk.

Over the course of this year I have seen muntjac, fallow and red deer in Thorndon and on 18th November I had a lovely view of an adult female roe deer, with two fawns, in a field near Braiseworth. Roe deer are remarkable in that they mate during late summer but their young are not born until the following spring. By this time of year the young have lost their spotty, juvenile markings and look like miniature versions of the adult. It is common for roe deer to have two young and so the ones I saw will have been a mother and her two young from this year.

As always at this time of year I should like to take this opportunity to thank all the people who have been in touch with me during the year to report birds and other wildlife of interest in Thorndon, Rishangles, Hestley Green and Braiseworth and I hope we can look forward to our birds and wildlife brightening up the short days that lie ahead.

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