

## Thorndon Birdlife, April 2019

I am writing this at the spring equinox, officially the first day of the spring, and at the moment we have a profusion of daffodils and primroses in flower and many other plants coming into leaf around the village.

April is a very exciting month, when the majority of our summer visitors return from their winter quarters thousands of miles away, and by the end of the month we can expect our swallows and house martins to be back from Africa, hawking for insects over and around the village. Plenty of summer visitors have been seen already, especially along the coast where migrants tend to stop off to feed after crossing the Channel and the North Sea on their gruelling journeys to their breeding grounds, and where those that will stay to breed here make their landfall.

Individuals of many bird species that we tend to think of as resident - because we can find them here throughout the year - are actually migrants and a good example is the common buzzard. Before they spread to Suffolk as a breeding species, common buzzards were a scarce winter visitor and passage migrant, especially during March. I was not surprised, therefore, to receive a report of a small group being harassed by what were, presumably, settled breeding birds. This was on 19th March and I saw four together myself on 20th. Even though we see them quite often now, a group of buzzards, soaring with their wings held in a shallow 'V', is still quite a striking sight.

In mid March I saw a group of 11 goldfinches along The Street and this, one of our prettiest birds, is much more common than it was and it is thought that this is because fewer of them now migrate to Iberia for the winter, instead staying here to feed at garden feeding stations. In the last edition I mentioned having seen fallow deer last month and on 6th March I saw six red deer together between Thwaite and Thorndon. All six were males, three big adults with very impressive antlers and three smaller juveniles, with much shorter antlers. I have seen red deer in our area before, but I'd never seen six together. They were very impressive, almost looking a bit incongruous, and I was surprised to read that the ones in East Anglia are an isolated population.

Also on the mammal front, I was intrigued by two brown hares that were lying face-to-face for several hours on 16th March. I wondered if they were simply enjoying the sunshine. They had moved on by the evening.

Also during April, look out for brimstone and orange-tip butterflies and other flying insects; two of my favourites are the dark-edged bee-fly and the St. Mark's fly.

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

Stephen Dean

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