

Thorndon Birdlife, March 2020

At the beginning of February I was delighted to see a very good display of snowdrops in the churchyard and I was rather surprised to see daffodils already in flower. Perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised given the very mild winter that we have had so far, with few frosts. The days are getting longer as we head towards the spring equinox and the lengthening days and the mild temperatures will be stimulating our resident birds to sing, pair up and nest. These changes will also be triggering the migratory instinct in those that have been here for the winter, such as the redwings and fieldfares I saw heading east over the Thwaite Road on 17th February.

During the week commencing 17th February there have been a lot of sightings of red kites across Suffolk and I received a report of one, also along the Thwaite Road, during the previous week. I have always associated these early spring records of red kites with March, so perhaps their wanderings are getting a little earlier.

I was very interested to receive a report of what may well have been a dipper, which was seen along the River Dove in the first half of February. The description I received of a brown bird with a white breast, flying like a kingfisher, sounds perfect for a dipper and we do sometimes get these birds in Suffolk during the winter, although they are rare. The ones we get here are usually the black-bellied dippers from mainland Europe, but I have also seen the British chestnut-bellied dipper in East Anglia in the winter (at Bawburgh Mill in Norfolk). The last one I saw in Suffolk was on the River Gipping at Needham Market a couple of years ago and I was surprised to see it catching small bullhead fish because all the ones I'd seen previously were catching insect larvae. The only other black-bellied dipper I have seen in Suffolk was on Belstead Brook, near Ipswich, in 1991, so to see one in Thorndon would be a real treat.

I've also seen the barn owl along the Thwaite Road again recently and I heard a great spotted woodpecker drumming to proclaim its territory along The Street on 19th February.

In March we should start to notice more birdsong as birds establish their territories and try to attract a mate, and we should also hear the first of our summer visitors, the chiffchaff and the blackcap, before the end of the month. Look out, too, for brimstone and orange-tip butterflies.

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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