

Welcome to this January Newsletter Jenny Harris had idea to call it Lockdown News - very good. Enjoy, stay safe and warm and keep connected.  
If you feel like a chat at any time or about anything please contact either of the two Linda's Linda Biddle or Linda Clark

### Observations through a Wing window.

During this time of dull cold days and enforced indoor life there has been more time to sit and observe the goings on of the creatures that visit our garden.

In Spring, last year, I joined the BTOs free garden birdwatch project and ever since, my obsession with daily lists has somewhat taken over. In addition to list keeping is a growing awareness of the habits of the birds that visit my, I have to say, numerous feeders. Observing the birds through the window encouraged me to keep my window cleaner than it would have otherwise been and to mix sunflower hearts with black sunflowers to slow the birds down, just a little, otherwise I would have to return to paid work.

I notice a solitary Greenfinch that always accompanies a 'charm' of Goldfinches which seem to prefer the sunflower seeds rather than the nyger.

Occasionally I have 5 or 6 Greenfinches visit but the loner never joins them and returns the next day with the Goldfinches.

Most of the tit species visit; Great, recently belling, Blue, very feisty, Coal, darts in and out quickly but increasingly staying at the feeder for a little longer.

I've watched the Long Tailed tits grow into fine breeding plumage, their tails appear to grow in length by the day. I surmise these are some of last year's brood but don't know for sure. They come in flocks of 6 -10, sometimes more, constantly calling, attacking the fat balls with gusto before they move on.

Chaffinches are coming in greater numbers now particularly during the cold weather and arrive to feed on the seed I throw down each morning. I do feel very guilty if I'm late in this task, especially after these cold nights. Unfortunately a lot of the chaffinches have fungal foot ( Viral Papilloma ) which is distressing to see but I have yet to find a dead one with this affliction.

Mortality comes from, what I see in my garden at least, 2 sources - the window and the Sparrowhawk. I have only seen the male hawk and his tally so far are two blackbirds, both female I'm afraid and a couple of Wood Pigeon. I'm sure there are more. Sometimes the hawk plucks the bird in the garden especially in the case of the pigeon, smaller victims are plucked elsewhere. A top bird.

I missed 'my' little Wren for several days this past week and was very worried, desperately throwing out mealworms into the undergrowth but then he/she appeared again coming to bathe in the pond. Not singing yet that I've heard, really quite secretive creeping and flitting around and so pretty.

House Sparrows congregate in the same 2 bushes all the time flying back to them when disturbed. The Tree Creeper does the same round going to the same trees on each visit. I don't often catch sight of him but am sure he comes most days.

The cock Pheasant has recently discovered the seed and used to come only in the afternoons but now he is waiting for me each morning. I would like to think he is the same one we had last year and has escaped the guns yet again. He has the most beautiful plumage and although I realise the impact on the 'countryside' that all these 'farmed' pheasants have, I can't but help but to admire him and hope he won't stray further afield.

What else? Great Spotted Woodpeckers. I had a brood coming to the feeders last summer and of course all juveniles had the red nape, but now I find that the bird(s) who visit still have the red nape and therefore is male. Very occasionally I spot a female who goes to the peanut feeder out of sight of the window whereas the male, greedier or braver, visits the feeder which is more easily observed and has a developed an appetite for the sunflower seeds so maybe I see the males more frequently than the females - let's hope so. But then, of course they are predators so



something else to worry about come the breeding season, especially where the feisty blue tits are concerned.

Starlings and Jackdaws are obvious by their absence although I do get them in the summer. A pair of local Magpies visit, albeit infrequently.

Two Nuthatches (my husband's favourite) come and we know there are at least two as they have been seen together. I wonder why I haven't seen them more often up to now but a lot of work has been going on in a small wood nearby, untouched for 3 decades or longer, I fear it has destroyed their habitat. Very sad if that's the case but what to do?

Let's not forget the flicking Dunnocks, the Blackbirds, often eight at once and maybe now with competition from birds from northern climes, the influx of Redwings on next door's Holly tree and the, now singing, Robin.

Lastly but definitely not least a Marsh tit. I wait and hope that I will see a couple together. He is quite brave and comes to the feeder that is within a metre of the window. Absolutely wonderful! I am so appreciative and lucky to have this wonderful theatre to watch every day.

I understand that not everybody has the same opportunity to do as I do. So, like many of you reading this (if you've got this far!) in little ways I try to make life better when it comes to the natural world.

(Feeders cleaned and checked for sharp edges regularly. Total number of species seen in garden 36)

Linda Clark.

## Roy Lemmon - Gall recorder.

Roy was my 'victim' for this month's bulletin so pay attention as you will be next! What Roy doesn't realise is how much he is valued by our Society. Roy was one of the leaders of the first outdoor meeting, plant Galls at Priors Coppice, I attended and in a way was responsible for inspiring me to join RNHS. Roy's knowledge about all things botanical and mycological is amazing and he is always willing to share that knowledge.



Roy directing operations at Burley Wood Plant Gall meeting Autumn 2019.

Roy (middle) with Phil to the left and Hendrina. Bat detecting. Thanks to Phil for the photos.

I first became interested, principally in botany, in my early teens at Stamford School and this extended to an interest in nature in general as the years went by.

In the 1970s I developed an interest in Fungi, initially in the 'big ones', i.e. mushrooms and toadstools but soon realised that is an enormous subject and well covered by a sizeable

band of amateur experts, so I decided to devote my efforts to the microfungi especially the rusts smuts and mildews.

The high point of my mycological career was in October 2010 when I found a new British record in Barnsdale Lodge Wood. It wasn't a new rust but an 'old' rust on a new plant, Water Chickweed, and so became a new British record. Kew told me that it is also found in this combination in Lithuania.

I have been interested in the host/parasite combination for a long time and this explains my interest in plant galls and hence my acting as Plant Gall recorder for RNHS.

Roy Lemmon. January 2021.

[John Rogers wrote this letter in July 2020 to thank everyone who has contributed to making the newsletter. Thank you John it is always good to have feedback.](#)

Dear Madam,

What a lovely surprise it was to receive the Newsletter in April, just as the effects of the lockdown were dawning on us all. It did, as Peter suggested, help to lift our spirits. We have had two more since then, each with interesting items, including the biographies. What a great idea it was. We hope it can continue to be published to keep us all together in enduring the current problems and reminding us of the wildlife around us. Thank you very much to all those involved especially Linda Biddle, Linda Clark, Peter Scott and Carolyn Baxter. We hope we can speak for all members of the Society in thanking them. Thank you too to Phil ( he doesn't need a surname adding ) for his emails with recordings. These too have lifted our spirits as well as reminding us of past songs which we will continue to hope return.

With many thanks and best wishes

Jan and John Rodgers

---

### **Memories of times past . Jenny Harris.**

Being told to stay at home during Lockdown, many of us have been tidying and cleaning out 'stuff' as never before. While doing a bit of that, I found an old field notebook dating back, would you believe it, to the mid-1980s. In it were recorded some haunting wildlife memories. Until 1998, I live on the eastern edge of Oakham, in Jasper Road, with allotments and rough ground to the north, beside open arable fields, before the by-pass was built. It was a lovely place to live with flocks of Meadow Pipits and Skylarks on the winter stubble, Reed Buntings coming to feed in the garden, and we could still expect to see Redpolls feeding in Alder trees not ten yards from the house. In 1984, on 28 April, I recorded Turtle Doves calling from overhead wires on the edge of the housing estate; at least two pairs regularly nested in the allotments. On 5 May, in a row of willows opposite my house, two male cuckoos were calling in display flight, again an annual occurrence. When disturbed both flew off, one carrying what appeared to be a worm but could have been a woolly caterpillar I now realise. That day, I had another cuckoo sighting, at Field 9 on Lyndon NR; the bird

let me get quite close as it fed on a worm or caterpillar on the path. Later, two Whimbrel flew to the shore below Lax Hill, opposite Waderscrape Hide, calling as they came. What a day to remember, but it didn't seem so unusual then. Back to April 1984, a visit to Egleton Reserve was rewarded with the sight of 27 Yellow Wagtails around the shore of Lagoon III, but this was surpassed by a record I made on 12 April 1985 of approximately 40 Yellow Wagtails at Egleton.



The birds could regularly be seen in the hedgerow along the minor road to Egleton church, which is now part of the cycle route around Rutland Water. All these are rare sights now, so what a treasure trove my little notebook has been.

January 2021

Photo Yellow Wagtail. Peter Scott

### **Richard Brown**

We have recently been told of the death of Richard after a very short illness. We are greatly saddened, and send our heartfelt condolences to Linda on this sudden and very upsetting news. Richard and his wife Linda were both members of the society for around 10 years, joining shortly after they came to the area. Both Richard and Linda were keen attendees at all our meetings, indoor and out and sometimes brought along their grandson to join in, as they did for our river dipping outing to Caistor. They were also keen helpers at the children's bughunt event held in 2019 at Ketton. Richard volunteered to step in as butterfly recorder on the retirement of Alistair Lawrence in 2016 a position which he held and carried out very effectively and reliably, jointly leading visits to Ketton Quarry for several summer meetings. He and Linda became members of our committee where they both gave great assistance to us when we were short of a secretary, often volunteering to take minutes, which were written promptly and accurately. They took over as editors for a short time in 2019 on Hendrina's retirement, and did a sterling job. We valued their contribution to RNHS greatly, and we shall remember Richard as a quiet and unassuming gentleman, who was always willing to help out when needed.