



The Cam Valley Wildlife Group Newsletter

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Wildlife at Lipyeate

In Coleford we are always pleased to receive information from the Group through our Parish Council. I have to blame Phil Gait for encouraging me to provide some local input from the village, so I hope you will find of interest my personal, non-scientific, observations from living in Lipyeate, between Coleford and Holcombe, for some 38 years.



Perhaps the most stunning impact has been the expansion of the Raven population. Some 15 years ago I watched the common site of a buzzard being attacked by a 'crow'; it was then obvious that the two were the same size. So through binoculars the tell-tale diamond shaped tail of the Raven was clear. Steadily they have increased in number with the most obvious ones, both visually and aurally, nesting in a huge cedar tree next door to us. Three years ago we came across a large motionless black mass in the drive. On close inspection it appeared to be a 'small' stunned Raven. Our helpful neighbouring

vet gave it a check over and could see no damage, concluding it had probably failed its first flying lesson.

So we brought it closer to the house and put bowls of water and cat food next to it. Over the next couple of days it revived magically, enjoyed a wider diet of mealworms and started hopping onto low things. Meanwhile its raw croaks had summoned its mates so we found ourselves feeding his family. Eventually he regained his wings and flew off, but we're sure he's not far off. Only when you are close up do you realise quite how large they are – see photo of him on the garden seat.



Going back to Buzzards, when I first came here they were a rare treat and only really visible in numbers on Exmoor. Now a daily occurrence and it's not unusual to see 6 soaring away and mewing. As I write I hear and see a buzzard above me.

In similar vein how many Red Kites did we see here 30 years ago? Over that period I have visited family near the Chilterns many times and have witnessed their original occupation of east Oxfordshire. My Mother's neighbour started feeding them - on one occasion we counted as many as 24 around her garden. We have observed their gradual spread westwards down the M4, A4, A361 corridor. Our first local sighting was at Longleat and they are now regular visitors to Lipyeate. So far it's a story of winners. At the same time we have had losers. Lapwings in small flocks have disappeared, so have greenfinches and the once regular cuckoo. Other winners – Goldfinches, as many as 28 on the lawn at one count, long tailed tits in groups up to 10, nuthatches, dunnocks. Seemingly in steady state are Barn Owls, Tawny Owls, Jays, House sparrows, wagtails.

We keenly await the arrivals of the first swallows. We built a new garage with an open front and were so pleased to see the roof timbers immediately being colonised. From our observations over the years the first arrivals tend to be in the second week in April, with perhaps the odd early bird. We are not aware of any significant change to this timing over 30 plus years. What is the experience of others? Their departure seems a bit more random; in 2020 they had all gone before the end of August, the second week in September has been the norm.

At ground level we are lucky enough to have toads and great crested newts – in profusion. Also stoats, though sadly two less as the cat decided they were fair game. And I must mention the daily sightings of Roe deer, and the occasional Muntjac. In this context, the name Lipyeate is believed to be a corruption of Leap Gate, the feature built into a fence/hedge surrounding a deer wood which allowed deer to leap into but not out of the hunting ground.



Finally our rarest and most treasured sighting some 30 years ago attaching itself to our garage wall and unmistakable – a Hoopoe.

Alan Townsend

Freddy the pheasant – my welcome new resident

Upon a morning in early December 2021 a pheasant and his girlfriend arrived in my one acre garden – a real treat for me as I had never before seen a female pheasant. However, that was the one time she appeared so it is feared that the local poachers zapped her, judging by all the 'bangs' nearby.

But Freddy lives on with half a tail to tell (14th February 2022 St Valentine's day)! He gave me some anxious moments at 10.20pm on 29th December, when beneath my bedroom window he delivered his impressive alarm call – kur kuk, kur kuk, kur kuk! I suspect a fox loomed.

If anyone knows of a Frederica please send her along as Freddy is lonely.

Fergus Callander

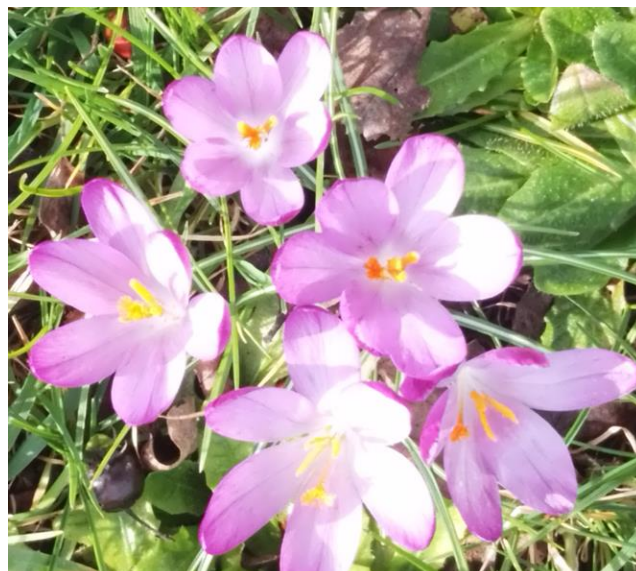
Members photos



Snowdrops – Maggie Edwards



Hellebores – Maggie Edwards



Crocus – Maggie Edwards



Snowflake – Maggie Edwards



Daffodil – Maggie Edwards



Heron on Somerset Levels – Maggie Edwards

Members photos

Phil Gait has sent in photos of leaf mines in holly. The mines are the feeding site of insect larvae as they eat their way through the plant tissues in relative safety within a leaf. However, this does not fool birds such as tits, which will attack a mine to get at the larva within. The insects that mine leaves are chiefly micro-moths and flies of the family Agromyzidae along with an assortment of flies from seven other families, plus a small number of sawflies and beetles. The small size of many of the leaf-mining species results in their rare recording as adults.

Different leaf miners will use differing ranges of plants, so it is important first to know the species of plant in question. The shape of the mines (galleries and blotches), the pattern and mass of the droppings (frass) and the characteristics of the larva, cocoon and pupa can then be used to identify the miner to species level. Some also make cut-outs in the leaf, which aids identification. Backlighting the leaf for photographing can help to show some of these features, but sometimes the only way to identify a leaf miner accurately is to dissect the larva or pupa out of the leaf or rear it to its adult stage.



Holly – Phil Gait

The fact that the photo of the mines are in holly is helpful, as it means it is very unlikely to be made by a moth caterpillar. Moth larvae tend to make full-depth galleries or blotches, whereas fly larvae tend to mine either the upper or the lower leaf surface, or both and tend to make more frass. Sawfly larvae make blotch mines, have visible legs and usually make darker frass in greater amounts than flies.



The look of this mine suggests very strongly that it was formed by the Holly Leaf Miner, *Phytomyza ilicis*, a widespread and very common species in Britain. Although it was formerly thought that there were several species making similar mines in Holly, *Nature Spot* informs that recent research has shown that there is only one species in the UK and *bladmineerders.nl* informs that only one species in the group it belongs to is found in Europe. This small Agromyzid fly lays its eggs in slits on the underside at the base of a leaf petiole or in the mid-rib in May or June. There can be two or three of these miners in one leaf. The larva feeds on the mid-rib initially, but moves out

to produce a characteristic meandering corridor and blotch pattern. If it manages to make a blotch before the callus tissue produced by the plant chokes its corridor and it escapes predation, it will pupate within the leaf to emerge as an adult in spring. Because the holly in parks and gardens tends to have thicker leaves, *Ph. ilicis* is more common there than in nature.

Deborah Porter

Nature notes from May and June 2021

Each day I make a nature note. It could be about something new to me or unusual. For a week in May we were in North Wales, but most of my wanderings were quite close to my home in Lower Coleford.

6th May 2021

I noticed some small mayfly nymphs on the Willow Moss in our pond. Although the Pond Olive is the commonest mayfly in ponds, it has some interesting features. It can survive very low oxygen levels in cold conditions and it is ovoviviparous. The eggs develop inside the female for 10 to 14 days and then hatch as soon as she lays them.

25th May 2021

The Great Orme, only 5 kilometres from our son's home, is a great place to find rare species. Today we found Hoary Rock-rose. It is smaller, greyer and hairier than its common relative and grows in profusion on the higher and stonier parts of The Great Orme. Whilst we were there, we also saw a small group of Choughs, close enough to pick them out from a large flock of Jackdaws.



26th May 2021

I was surprised to find another North Wales Coast special only 300 metres from my grandson's school. We were early for picking him up, so stopped in a small abandoned quarry. As well as this Nottingham Catchfly, we spotted Kidney Vetch, Maiden Pink and Knotted Clover.

3rd June 2021

We walked to Ham Woods Quarry, near Shepton Mallet, today to photograph Twayblades. There were large numbers along the woodland edge. When I looked at some of the photos, I realised that there were *Myrmica* species of ants on the plants. Ants are known to collect nectar from Twayblade and at the same time get pollen grains on their heads to take to other plants.



13th June 2021

We visited a local open garden today. There were a large number of exuviae on the pond plants, though no sign of any freshly emerged dragonflies. Southern Hawker dragonflies mature away from the water often around tree canopies in woodland glades. On the other hand, there were plenty of Azure Damselflies and a few Large Red Damselflies around the pond.



29th June 2021

I found this strange fungus at the base of an Oak tree trunk. It had drops of amber liquid oozing from the surface. Oak Bracket fungus is not good news for the Oak. It causes white root and decay in the trunks of affected trees.

Veryan Conn



Hedgehogs in our garden

So far this year there's no sign on any hedgehogs as yet. I expect they'll still be in hibernation but hopefully in the next couple of weeks we'll see evidence that they're about.

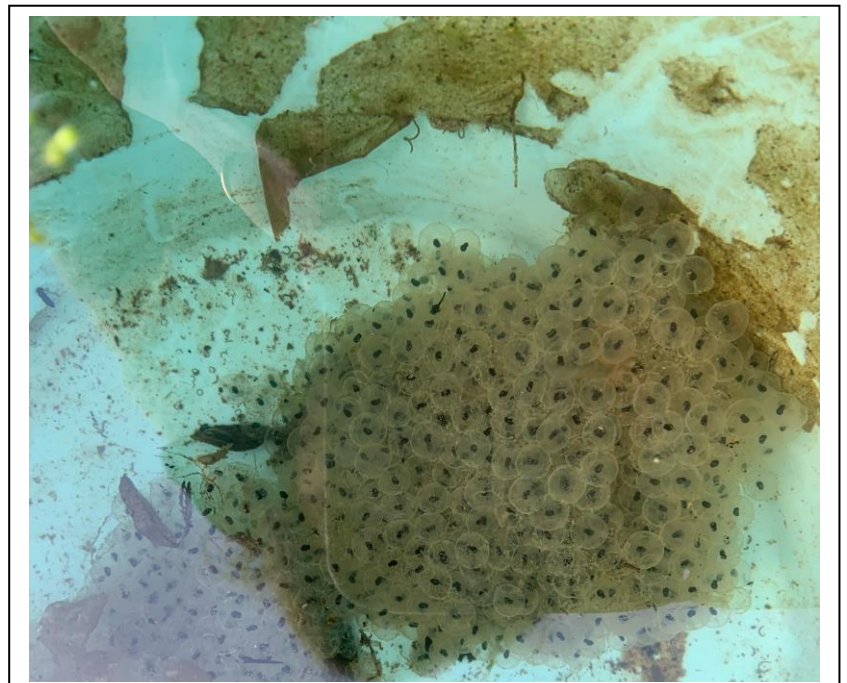


I've put little sticks in front of the entrance to the houses so I can see if anything emerges. I've got the camera on as well so fingers crossed. There's been a lot of hay and leaves pulled inside so I'm hoping there's an occupant.

Do keep leaving out water and dry cat food as they'll be hungry when they do emerge. Spring is definitely in the air though.

This clump of frogspawn was 'rescued' from a puddle. Someone asked for help in relocating it all as it would never have survived where it was. We think a pond must have been filled in or the frogs maybe lost their sense of direction as they tend to return to the same ponds each year.

Zoe Nicholls



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Next Newsletter: The copy date for the next Newsletter is **15th June 2022**

This Newsletter is published four times a year by Cam Valley Wildlife Group, an independent, volunteer-run wildlife group, covering Midsomer Norton, Radstock and surrounding villages.

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