

Birds and other wildlife recorded in February 2024

Red Kites were frequently recorded gliding over head, but no Buzzard this month. Green Woodpeckers were also noted on several occasions, sometimes two calling against or to one another. No Great-spotted Woodpeckers noted, however; listen out for early spring drumming! The common corvids were all noted: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. The Rooks are just beginning to start on new nests – virtually none were left from last year – there have been some very strong winds. Do keep an eye out for activity in the old wood. Goldcrests have been recorded – a tiny bird but quite vocal with a high register. Blue Tits, Great Tits and Long-tailed Tits have all been seen – but nobody recorded a Coal Tit. They are there somewhere! Nuthatches are very vocal now and have been recorded on several occasions. Wrens are also regularly heard – both singing and uttering alarm calls.

In the thrush family: Blackbirds, Song Thrushes, and Redwings – but no records of Fieldfares. Dunnocks and – nearer to human habitation – House Sparrows are about. Among the finches we've had records of Chaffinch, Greenfinch, and Goldfinch and the delightful Siskin, a bird of the forests, mainly recorded near here in the winter – and venturing onto garden feeders too.

The mammal list is brief – Grey Squirrel and Rabbit (including one deceased specimen). Signs of Badger activity and the aroma of Fox. There is also Frog spawn in the pond. The Dog's Mercury is in bloom and orchid rosettes are appearing widely. Look out for the fungi too.

Birds and other wildlife recorded in January 2024

A Pheasant was heard calling. Several times Red Kites were seen circling overhead – what an uplifting sight! Also flying over were various gulls: Lesser Black-backs and Black-headed. Woodpigeons and Stock Doves were recorded but not Collared Doves, usually encountered near the housing. Both common woodpeckers were about, Green, and Great-Spotted. The usual corvids were recorded: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. Only two Rook nests so far – rookeries are mobile habitations, but it would be sad to lose ours – it doesn't seem many years ago that the nests were numbered in their 40s and even more! Goldcrest has been recorded more than once – not a rarity but often hard to hear (especially as one ages). Also, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit and a small flock of Long-tailed Tits. Nuthatch and Wren were around – both often heard before seen! Four of the thrush family were recorded: Blackbird, Song Thrush, and their wintering cousins – Fieldfare and Redwing, but no Mistle Thrush; these are early breeders so it's really worth listening out for their long carrying and slightly melancholy calls now. Robin, Dunnock and House Sparrow were also recorded, as was the unexpected Grey Wagtail, probably on its way to local garden ponds. Finally, the finches: Chaffinch, Greenfinch (whose population may be recovering somewhat from a finch disease), Bullfinch and quite a lot of Goldfinches.

Other wildlife: Muntjac were seen, and so – more unusually - were Roe Deer; on one occasion five of the latter were recorded, including 3 bucks. Good news! Grey Squirrels were seen a-plenty, and there were occasional Fox sightings. Bee Orchid rosettes were seen in the area not far from the pond, and Hazel female flowers, really tiny and scarlet, were plentiful. Look out for other early woodland specialists!

Thanks to all those who send in their records; it really helps to build up a picture of the wealth of wildlife in the Woods and will help when we have to fight those development battles!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in November & December 2023

Red Kites have been fairly commonly seen overhead, often uttering their mewing call; the only other bird of prey recorded in these last two months was Buzzard. A Tawny Owl is often heard in the night – and probably comes from the wood; we know they have bred there in the past. Gulls – mainly Herring Gulls fly over, on their way to the canal and nearby fields.

Woodpigeons are not hard to record but no Stock Doves were noted. Both the common woodpeckers – Green and Great-spotted were heard/ seen. All the common corvids were recorded: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow – and at last a Raven was noted too, in late November. Some years ago, one had to travel quite a way to find a Raven, but they are breeding in Rushmere and maybe they will decide to breed in Linslade too. Listen out for the “cronking” call – louder, coarser and deeper than a Carrion Crow.

Blue and Great Tits and their distant relatives, Long-tailed Tits were encountered fairly frequently but no Coal Tits though we know they are to be found in the conifers. Nuthatch and Treecreeper were also about- the latter is really difficult to spot – it merges well into the bark of the trees. Wrens were often heard, making little alarm calls and Starlings were also recorded. In the thrush family: Blackbirds were about and an occasional Song Thrush, and at the end of November a group of Redwings was noted. Look out for these Scandinavian thrushes – and Fieldfares as well. As the daylight gradually extends Mistle Thrushes, which are very early breeders, may be heard making their lonely far- carrying calls; listen out!

Robins and Dunnocks were fairly frequent. One species caused a little controversy – Grey Wagtail! Not a species you'd expect to find in a wood – but one was recorded on the pond in a garden adjoining the wood, so we'll go for it! Of the finches only Chaffinch and Goldfinch were noted – listen out for Bullfinch – they are around in the wood, and Greenfinches, which have been suffering from a disease, may well be making a comeback.

Mammals: Not unexpectedly there were plenty of records of Grey Squirrel. More exciting were occasional glimpses of Roe Deer, including two on the 16th of December. Roe is one of only two deer native to the UK (the other is Red Deer, which we are somewhat unlikely to find in Linslade!)

Please send in all your records – birds, animals, unusual plants.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed – and to Dave for his rainfall records; if you thought it had been a wet year – you were right!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in October 2023

Several people have seen Red Kites over the woods – what an uplifting sight they are, apparently effortlessly gliding overhead. Buzzard has also been seen, occasionally “mewing” as it flies. Woodpigeons are fairly common – and our UK residents may be joined by tens of thousands of others migrating southwest to our warmer areas. No Stock Doves recorded; they are easy to miss or confuse with the Woodpigeons. A Great-spotted Woodpecker was recorded but no Greens. Our common corvids were regulars: Magpie, Jay (many on the 21st), Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow - one day the Ravens will decide to take up residence here!

In contrasting size to most of the above, there have been several sightings of Goldcrest, often in larches and conifers, but hard to hear as the human hearing system deteriorates! Blue and Great Tits were regularly heard, as were Long-tailed Tits, now all beginning to gather in winter flocks – but no Coal Tits recorded. Chiffchaffs are still calling and may well remain in the colder months ahead.

Treecreeper and Wren have been recorded, as have Blackbird and Song Thrush, and Redwings on the 16th. Now is the time to start looking out for these winter thrushes: Redwings and Fieldfares. There will also be many Scandinavian Blackbirds arriving too. Robins and Dunnocks were fairly frequently recorded, and several House Sparrows were found near the Knaves Hill entrance at the end of the month; look for them near housing, not in the middle of the wood! The only finch recorded this month was Chaffinch.

One not so welcome bird was a Rose-ringed Parakeet on the 16th. There are some notable omissions, Stock Dove, Green Woodpeckers, Coal Tit, Nuthatch, Bullfinch and Goldfinch. Look out for these as well as the Scandinavian thrushes, Brambling and Siskin!

Other non-bird sightings include a Hornet nest and several Red Admirals. Mammal records were Grey Squirrel and a deceased Vole. Our weather recorder says this is the 3rd wettest October in 12 years of recording, with 108mm of rain, compared with an average of 71.7mm. No wonder we have a good supply of mud!

Thanks to everyone who sends in records – keep going!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in September 2023

A few Red Kites were spotted overhead – always a pleasure to see these majestic birds gliding with such apparent ease. No other raptors were recorded, though Tawny Owls were heard from time to time from people's bedrooms! Woodpigeons and Stock Doves were regulars. Green Woodpeckers were about and so,

almost certainly, were Great-spotted Woodpeckers – though nobody actually noted one. All the common corvids were about: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. There are a number of Ravens in nearby Rushmere, so maybe one day. In complete size contrast – the Goldcrest, one of the UK's very smallest birds, has been recorded on a few occasions this month, as have Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit and Long-tailed Tits. The new merlin app has also recorded – more than once – a Spotted Flycatcher – not exactly a mega-rarity but very unexpected. The cynics among us hold our breath. Nuthatch was seen and heard as were Wren, Blackbird and Song Thrush. Robins and Dunnock were also regularly recorded. Chaffinch was also present. Another finch was recorded on the merlin app – a Siskin, normally very much a winter visitor.

A number of butterflies were recorded: Large White, many Speckled Woods. Green-veined White, and Red Admiral. A Common Darter was also seen.

Grey Squirrels and Rabbits were the only mammals noted this month.

Birds and other wildlife recorded in August 2023

A fairly quiet month in the woods – for the wildlife and the humans (except for some of the litter louts). Red Kites were seen fairly regularly, often uttering their far-carrying mewing call. Sparrowhawks were observed, included, sadly, one deceased juvenile. Herring Gulls flew over occasionally. There were a lot of Stock Dove records – this is a bird that is often overlooked as they are frequently mistaken for Woodpigeons, a species which is encountered on virtually every walk round the woods. Tawny Owl was heard calling, but not actually seen. Both Green and Great-spotted Woodpecker were seen and/ or heard, as were all the common corvids: Magpie, Jay, Rook, Carrion Crow and Jackdaw.

Goldcrest, one of our smallest birds, was observed - they are quite common, but small and with a high call, are often hard to find; look in the larches and listen for a high-pitched call. All the common Tits were recorded: Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit and their very distant relation, Long-tailed Tit, the latter now gathering into autumn flocks with some youngsters still recognizably not quite yet in adult plumage.

Warblers: Chiffchaff and Blackcap. Although always thought of as summer visitors, both species may well stay around for the winter months. Nuthatch and Treecreeper were recorded, the latter usually very hard to actually see, almost camouflaged against tree bark. Blackbirds were commonly observed (but no Song Thrush this month), and Robin and Dunnock were noted. Strangely, no finches were recorded this month – no Chaffinches or Goldfinches; they will be around but in quiet unobtrusive post breeding and moult mode! Most visitors saw plenty of Speckled Wood butterflies – often spiralling in a pair in the dappled shade.

And the mammals? Rabbit and, of course, Grey Squirrel.

Birds and other wildlife recorded in July 2023

Not a very long bird list this month, a combination of breeding and post- breeding behaviour, and fewer human visits! But the butterflies have made up for the bird shortage.

Birds. A Buzzard was observed and heard flying overhead but no other birds of prey, except for a nighttime Tawny Owl, heard from nearby. Black-headed Gulls flew over, and there was no shortage of Stock Doves and Woodpigeons. Green Woodpecker called and the usual corvids were about: Magpie, Jay (including some juveniles), Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. Both Blue and Great Tits were regularly observed but not their close relation the Coal Tit – look especially in the conifers for this one. Long-tailed Tits were also recorded. A couple of warblers: Blackcap and Chiffchaff. Other warblers are still about too but not quite so obvious in their calls. Nuthatches whistled and called, and Wrens were frequently heard uttering their alarm call – a loud “check check” sound for such a small bird. Blackbirds and Song Thrushes were recorded as were Robins, and the occasional Skylark over adjoining fields.

Butterflies. Large Skipper; Small Skipper; Brimstone; Large White; Small White; Red Admiral (there seem to be huge numbers of these around this summer); Peacock; Comma; Marbled White; Gatekeeper; Meadow Brown; Ringlet. Look out for Speckled Wood – haunting the dappled shade of the woodland.

Mammals. Roe Deer; Grey Squirrel; Rabbit. Fox was detected by its scent!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in June 2023

It has been a fairly quiet time for bird recording this month. Many birds are feeding young and do not want to draw too much attention to themselves or their vulnerable youngsters. Some will be soon going into moult – another reason to keep a low profile as flight will be hampered, and a lot of energy is needed to start the new feather growth. Anyway, here is a summary of what has been noted this month: Red Kite (calling overhead pretty regularly), Buzzard, Tawny Owl (heard by sleepless folk in nearby houses!). Stock Doves and Woodpigeons frequent. Great-spotted Woodpecker was noted but nobody recorded a Green (though we know they are there!). All the common corvids were about: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow. Blue and Great Tits were around, but no Coal Tit was noted. Three warblers: Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Garden Warbler. Nuthatches were fairly regular as were Wrens, usually uttering warning calls from bushes and undergrowth. Blackbirds and Song Thrushes were seen and heard, as were Robins and Dunnock. Skylarks were overhead in the nearby fields, and the occasional Chaffinch was detected.

The only mammal recorded was – yes, you've got it – a Grey Squirrel!

A number of butterflies were noted: Commas, Large Skippers, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Speckled Wood and Ringlet. Look out for Marbled Whites, a striking and single-brooded butterfly around from mid-June to mid-August.

And look out for our plants too – the Common-spotted Orchids have passed their peak, but there are still a few around. Look out for Agrimony, Wild Carrot, the occasional poppy, knapweeds, Self-Heal and so many other flowering plants!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in May 2023

Many birds are rather quiet at this time of year – many have successfully bred and do not want to draw too much attention to themselves and their youngsters. They are probably more likely to be heard calling rather than singing. Several sightings of Red Kite, and a view of two Sparrowhawks together on the 4th. No shortage of Woodpigeons, and several Stock Doves. Great-spotted Woodpecker was seen but not a Green Woodpecker – though we know they are there. The common corvids were all observed: Magpie, Jay (sometimes with noisy squawking youngsters), Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow.

Blue Tits and Great Tits were around but nobody recorded Coal Tit – look in the larches and other conifers! A family of Long-tailed Tits was seen by the pond. Only two warblers were noted – Chiffchaff (plenty of these) and Blackcap; listen out for the Garden Warbler, a sort of slightly crazed Blackcap song, and for the scratchy notes of Whitethroat from hedges. Nuthatches were about and plenty of Blackbirds, and some welcome Song Thrushes. Robins and Wrens were heard rather than seen. There are Skylarks aplenty in the neighbouring fields. Finally, three finches: Chaffinch, Bullfinch and Goldfinch.

Two mammal species were recorded: the inevitable Grey Squirrel, and Roe Deer, not a common species. Keep an eye out for butterflies and other insects; people recorded Speckled Wood, Peacock and Brimstone – there are many more!

Birds and other wildlife recorded in April 2023

The occasional Pheasant was heard, perhaps celebrating an escape from nearby shooting! Red Kites were heard and seen fairly regularly overhead, with two together on the 9th. Buzzards were the only other birds of prey recorded this month, three together on one occasion. Woodpigeon and Stock Doves were encountered on most visits, and both common species of woodpecker were recorded: Green and Great-spotted. The regular corvids were noisily about: Jay, Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw and Jay. The number of nests in the somewhat mobile rookery has varied from apparently 9 to apparently 12!

All the common tits were seen – Blue, Great and Coal and their distant relation the Long-tailed Tit. The warblers are out in force, singing loudly – many Chiffchaffs, the more delicate-sounding Willow Warbler, and Blackcaps. Garden warblers should be around and they can be confused with Blackcaps by sound (though not in appearance).

The nearby fields have had large numbers of singing Skylarks, a Swallow was seen on the nearby field too, while within the woods the Nuthatches and Treecreepers have been seen and heard. Treecreepers can be quite hard to spot! Wrens are very common. Starlings were also around, often being encountered nearer to

the urban edges. Blackbirds are about and it is pleasing to hear the regular varied sound of Song Thrushes., three on one visit at the end of the month.

Robins and Dunnocks were also reported regularly. House Sparrows also favour the urban fringe. Finally, to the finches: Chaffinch, Greenfinch and Goldfinch were all recorded; nobody saw a Bullfinch?

The mammal count has gone up: not just grey squirrel this month, but also Muntjac and Roe Deer, and the occasional lingering scent of Fox.

A few butterfly species were noted: Brimstone, Peacock, Orange-tip, and Small White. Other insects recorded were Dark-bordered Beefly and Red-tailed Bumblebee.

And of course: the Woods' crowning glory – a wonderful display of Bluebells. Other woodland species include Dog's mercury, Lesser Celandine and Wood Anemones.

Thanks to everyone who has sent in a note of what they've seen.

Birds and other wildlife recorded in March 2023

Well, spring began at the end of this month – look out for those flowers in the old wood – Wood Anemone, Dog's Mercury and, of course, Bluebells; and the basal leaf rosettes of some of the orchids along the sides of some of the tracks and near the pond. There have been several sightings of Red Kite, their call often alerting us to look up. On two or three occasions a couple of Buzzards have been around too, and occasionally Herring Gull passed overhead. Stock Dove and Woodpigeon were spotted on most visits. Green Woodpeckers – often heard before being seen, and Great-spotted Woodpeckers have been drumming.

The corvids have been noisily around: Magpies, Jay, Jackdaw, Rooks and Carrion Crow. The Rookery has been fluctuating in numbers – it now seems to have settled to about 9 active nests, but higher numbers were counted earlier in the month. They are early breeders, but things can still change so look at those large twiggy nests and see how many are occupied! Blue Tits and Great Tits (did nobody spot a Coal Tit in the larches or other conifers?), and Long-tailed Tits, now in ones and twos rather than small flocks.

The sound of singing Chiffchaffs is a sure sign of spring – and there has been plenty of song. Listen out now for other migrant song – Willow Warbler and Blackcap in particular. Nuthatches and Wrens have been heard on many occasions, and – after what has seemed like a long break – the rich notes of Song Thrushes are being uttered again. Skylarks are heard over the “sheep field”. The only finch recorded this month was Chaffinch.

As for mammals – it's no surprise that Grey Squirrel was regularly spotted; look out for deer – Muntjac, Roe – both have been seen in previous months.

Two male Brimstone butterflies were seen on one of our action days – there should be plenty more about – and other early species too.

Birds and other wildlife recorded in February 2023

Red Kites and Buzzards were seen flying over the woods; there are opportunities for them to breed so keep a good look out. Look out also for non-woodland birds on the former “sheep field”; some 30 Lapwings were seen one day this month. (Some of you may remember the time when they actually bred there). Lesser Black-backs and Black-headed Gulls flew over. Stock Doves and Woodpigeons were seen pretty regularly but no Collared Doves this month, usually seen nearer to the house/road areas. The corvids were recorded regularly: Magpie, Jay, Jackdaws (a large flock appeared to observe us on our February action morning!), Rooks and Carrion Crows; the Rooks are now beginning to investigate nesting. Great-spotted Woodpecker was recorded but not Green Woodpecker.

Goldcrests were recorded – one of the UK's smallest birds – and the common tits: Blue, Great, Coal and their distant relations, the Long-tailed Tits. Nuthatch and Treecreeper were spotted, and Wrens were heard regularly, though not so frequently seen! Blackbirds were also regularly recorded, and it was good to receive records of their northerly cousins – Redwings (several on the 7th and 10th), and a Fieldfare also on the 10th. Robins and Dunnocks were common, and House Sparrows were recorded, usually not far from human habitation.

The “sheep field” also had a large flock – 25 of Skylarks on the 10th. Once, when it was a set-aside field, it was a seed-rich area. Of the finches there were records of Lesser Redpoll in the larches, Greenfinch, Bullfinch and Goldfinch.

Mammals. The inevitable Grey Squirrels, but also Roe Deer.

Plants. The Bluebells are progressing. Look out for Wood Sorrel, Primroses, and other spring flowers. The basal leaf rosettes of the Common Spotted orchids are also visible.

Thanks to everyone who has sent in records of what is to be enjoyed in the woods.

Birds and other wildlife recorded in January 2023

The occasional Pheasant was seen/heard near the fields. Red Kites were fairly common overhead – 5 over the ex-sheep field on the 26th. 2 Sparrowhawks were observed a couple of days before, and a Kestrel, not a common sighting. It is always very worthwhile looking at the fields on the north and west sides – this month over 40 Lapwing were seen. A variety of gulls flew over – Lesser Black-backed, Common, Herring and Black-headed. Woodpigeon, Stock Dove and the occasional Collared Dove were recorded. Great-spotted Woodpecker was heard but nobody recorded Green this month. All the regular corvids were observed: Magpie (sometimes in large, quarrelling parties), Jay, Jackdaw and Rook.

Look and listen out for Goldcrests in the larches and other coniferous trees and shrubs – certainly observed this month. The common tits were also recorded: Great, Blue, Coal and – their distant relative- the Long-tailed Tit. Nuthatches drew attention to themselves with their whistles and chatters, but nobody spotted Treecreeper. It’s quite a while since anyone recorded a Song Thrush – declining generally. Blackbirds still common, and Redwings were seen, and – a first for the wood for some time - a Fieldfare. Robin and Wren were seen, as were House Sparrows near the urban edge. Those nearby fields again! This time a record of Meadow Pipits, not a species you’ll see in the actual wood but well worth looking out for (along with Skylark) in the adjoining agricultural land. Finally, to the finches: Chaffinch fairly regular, and Greenfinch, a bird which has been hard hit by disease – but it may be making a slight recovery. Several were waiting to greet the members of the work party at the top of the bridleway on the 26th!

On this work party day two stalwarts with a ladder checked almost all the bird boxes to see if they had been used, and to discard old material. All had been used, and the mossy remains indicated almost certainly that they’d been occupied by tits. One egg was abandoned, and one nest had some very small twiggy bits of birch over the moss – a second occupant perhaps after the original bird had left.

Mammals: Grey Squirrel was the most frequently recorded mammal, but it was good to see (and smell) Red Fox.