

How's your knowledge of the birds on Port Meadow?



Wolvercote Commoners' NEWSLETTER November 2020

Walking out on the Commons, winter or summer, have you ever wondered how many different species of bird you might see during a year? Would it be 30, 40, 50 or even 60? Well you'd be a few birds out. It's hard to believe but the record so far stands at 121! Steve Goddard, our binocular-carrying local councillor and avid bird watcher, has managed 100 so far (but still counting!) And he now recalls some of his finds and the pleasure they give.

As winter approaches I will be looking out for the changes on our commons – mainly in the bird life. We can expect to see lots of wildfowl arriving, especially if the current floods at the southern end persist: look (and listen) for Wigeon, with their un-duck-like whistling call, Shoveler, Teal and Pintail, and the lovely Goosander. If we're lucky, in early winter, there will be waders feeding on the meadow: hopefully there will be Lapwing (a species which hasn't been doing so well nationally) and Golden Plover in some numbers.



Golden Plover



Goosander

Some winters, we have visits from the spectacular Waxwing – they aren't especially associated with water but I've seen them once near Aristotle Bridge, and once beside Wolvercote Village Hall. And we can certainly expect winter thrushes – Redwings (I've already heard the high-pitched whistle of those passing overhead on recent nights) and Fieldfares. It's also worth checking out the huge gull roost that sometimes forms on the floods – the majority are Black-headed, but you might get a few unusual visitors like Caspian, Glaucous or Iceland Gulls.

All year round we might hope to see Skylarks, but in spring, we'll hear their song, so evocative of the English countryside. At the same time, it'll be worth looking out for Sand Martins – maybe in mid-March – and a little later, the returning Swallows and House Martins hawking over the flood on the Meadow. I'll also be checking for migrant waders, we might get Avocet or any one of three sandpiper species (Common, Green and Wood), and if we're lucky a passing Scotland-bound Osprey.



Skylark

As the floods recede in late spring, it's worth looking out for passing Yellow Wagtails. And there's always the chance of a few rarer small migrants – Wheatears, or even a Ring Ouzel. Burgess Field is good too for breeding warblers in the early summer – they don't usually look like much, but sound gorgeous – Blackcaps have been compared to Nightingales for the beauty of their song, and Garden Warblers sound like Blackcaps, but speeded up and over-excited! Summer can be quieter, but it's always worth watching and listening for Swifts – birds which, for me, are the quintessence of summer with their soaring flight and screaming calls...

And, for those who may wonder what some of the rarer birds are like, visit the Commoners' Website (www.wolvercoteccommoners.co.uk) where some of the birds are illustrated (more will added in time).

A Defibrillator comes to town!



Every year sixty thousand people in the UK lose their lives to sudden cardiac arrest and rapid access to a defibrillator could reduce this toll considerably. So, after several years of community effort, Lower Wolvercote now has its own unit. It is sited outside the Wolvercote Mill Marketing Suite (soon to become a village community centre) in a keypad-accessible cabinet. If you suspect someone's heart has stopped, call 999 immediately and ask for the keypad access code. No training is required and the unit gives clear voice instructions. Thanks are due to a number of residents who have supported the project including (but not limited to) Carl and Katie Keeble in

The Post Box, Rachel Clack, Charlotte Croft and Steve Goddard who provided the lion's share of funding from his Councillor's Priority Fund. A huge thank you also goes to John Winterbottom, The Idle Women, Ben Avison, Mandolirium, and Bill Clarke for performing at, and organising, the 'Main Event' concert which also contributed to the purchase – and the chance to steal their concert name for a great headline! Yet another brilliant community effort. Local residents Amanda Saville, Steve Roberts and Phil Dove are guardians of the unit and they should be your first port of call for further information.



Val Tate & Steve Goddard at the official unveiling

Work Mornings have been suspended until further notice



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