



Aylburton Nature Watch



Issue 5
Summer 2022



Where has the time gone?

The time has gone so quick as we blaze our way through 2022 dealing with all that life has to throw at us.

Having caught Covid in May/June I am so glad to be out the other end with a full recovery and get and about once more especially with more time at my disposal.

People are regularly telling me about things they have seen or heard, which is great, so keep them coming. Margaret Edwards who covers miles during her regular walks



Skylark eggs

spotted the **reed warblers** in the village which was a great spot. Dave Bayliss took me to some local **badger** setts he knows of and also gave me an education in badgers at the same time. One point he did mention certainly stuck with me and that was: why do you think they called it Brockhollands? I will leave you to peruse the answer. Mark Sargent lets me know when he has seen the **kingfisher** explode down the local brooks which is always a pleasure for anyone. Colin Henderson took me to observe our local **peregrines** who were nesting at the time and Lynn Dunbar found her first **bee orchid** whilst observing the peregrines, much to her delight. It just proves there is a lot going on around us but how often do we see it or indeed look for it.

So, look harder, stop more often and go to different areas with your binoculars, maybe even take a snack and just sit and observe, you will be amazed what the wildlife are up to as you race by on your mobile phone. Better still contact Jonny Gently who writes in *Aylburton Nature Watch* and take up one of his wild bird tours, you will not be disappointed.

Skylarks are just one of those birds you not only need to stop and watch but listen carefully to their songs. It is a bird that I used to go and look for its eggs when I was still at school but I am not sure I ever found any which is not a surprise knowing how elusive they are. You will all have at one time come



Skylark

CONSERVATION STATUS ●

across them even if you did not know it. They are found in our local fields and can be heard as they climb up vertically into the sky until you cannot see them anymore.

This small brown bird with its equally small crest is not much different in size to a sparrow. Sadly it is on our **red** list which makes it even more special to see and hear it. They nest on the ground which leaves the eggs open to predation and also farm animals trampling on them or simple farming machinery going about their daily business.

Skylarks have a very tough life in today's terms but it is a credit to our local farmers that we can still see them like the **hares** and **plovers** albeit in reduced numbers.

Let me know if you manage to see one on your travels.

Dave Crabbe

THIS ISSUE OF AYLBURTON NATURE WATCH IS KINDLY SPONSORED BY



Tel: 01594 516161 • www.apexarchitectureltd.com



Cruelty to Wildlife

As you can see if you open the link to the news article below, you will see a **sparrow hawk** and a **goshawk** that were found in the village by a bus stop with shotgun pellets in them.

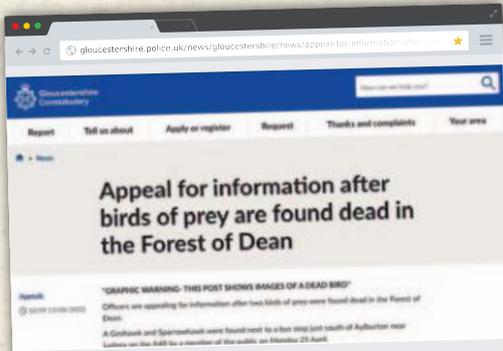
Now we can speculate all year long about who, what or why but the simple truth is these magnificent birds were killed by someone who knew what they were doing. You do not go out and stumble across either of these superb hawks let alone be in a position to kill them. So you can rule out someone with a shotgun who happens to see both these birds whilst walking in the woods. Most of you like myself have never seen a goshawk in the wild so I could wander round forever trying to find one.

Someone had a reason to kill them and they knew where and how to find them. I will leave you to speculate who that person might be or why they would want to commit these terrible acts. Hopefully with a vigilant public and the police involved it will come to light and these cruel acts will be brought to an end.

I would urge you to keep a lookout for anything suspicious, **inform the police if necessary but do not approach this person.**

Thank you.

Dave Crabbe



Read the original Police appeal here: tinyurl.com/2p99e492.

Every morning I am blessed to see so much deer whilst driving on the forest roads.

Although since the warmer weather has arrived, the trees of the forest are so green and full, it makes a good camouflage meaning they are harder to spot! The deer are so beautiful and I am always so happy to see them, which gives me good inspiration for drawing! I loved drawing this doe!

Kamie Marie Art



Kamie Marie Art [kamiemarieart](https://www.facebook.com/kamiemarieart)

Volunteers needed

A lot of work is being done on Aylburton's verges to manage and improve the nature and biodiversity of this land.

On Saturday 27th August from 2pm a team of people are required to rake the verges after it has been mowed. If you would like to participate, email aylburtonpc.fiona@gmail.com who will gladly add your name to the list.

The benefits to this programme are enormous to small animals, predatory birds, insects and plants, all of which will increase in numbers if we get this right. **Come and join us - and don't forget to bring a rake!**

Our resident bird touring guide has added a prize of a FREE wildlife tour for 2 people if you attend the raking event on the 27th August 2022.

Dave Crabbe



Wildlife Verge Raking
 from 2pm Saturday 27th August

Register in advance by emailing aylburtonpc.fiona@gmail.com for a chance to win a FREE wildlife tour for two from fodwildlifetours

Don't forget to bring a rake

Organised by Friends of Aylburton Wildlife



Ragged robin at Taurus Crafts

Competition Time!

Kevin the Squirrel is at it again - hiding somewhere in this newsletter. Find him, and enter our draw to win £10!

Simply reply with your answer to aylburtonnaturewatch@gmail.com with your name and address.

Correct answers will be put into a draw and the winner will receive £10! (Closing date: 31st July 2022).

Issue 4 Competition Winner!

Congratulations to **Beryl Clarke** who won the draw for spotting Kevin the Squirrel, hiding behind Aylburton Cross on page 1. Well done! £10 is on its way to you.

Help Required

If you are a local honey producer with your own bee hives we would like to talk to you please. Just email me on aylburtonnaturewatch@gmail.com.



Daisies at Stockwell



Raking, March 2022

Enjoying our native butterflies

Seeing the first butterfly of the year always lifts my spirits. It signals that spring has arrived, change is coming, it's time to get busy in the garden.

This instinctive feeling I have is echoed in the beliefs of many cultures where butterflies are widely regarded as a symbol of hope and transformation, birth and rebirth. Many religions see butterflies as sacred and symbolic of the soul. Did you know that in 17th century Ireland it was illegal to kill white butterflies as they were believed to be carrying the spirits of dead children?

Alongside the joy of seeing the first butterflies comes sadness that they are declining in numbers. Nitrogen pollution, pesticide use and climate change all threaten their survival. We have 62 species of butterfly in the UK but currently half of these appear on the Red List as threatened or near threatened with extinction.

Loss of habitat and changes in land use have also contributed to the demise of the butterfly, however, recent conservation projects have shown that recreating suitable habitats has helped to bring some species "back from the brink". We all have an amazing opportunity right now to get involved in these conservation efforts. Our gardens, however large or small, are the key.



Small Tortoiseshell CONSERVATION STATUS ●

PHOTO: LYN DUNBAR

Get the most out of birding

Birding can be a very satisfying and worthwhile pursuit. Spending time in nature, checking out from our busy day to day routines.

Many of you will know that our common bird species require very little effort to find and watch, but some other species can be tricky. So how do maximise your time and chances of finding more species and make the most out of your birding experience?

Let's use the humble example of our very own Sandford Road, leading from the A48 up a relatively steep sided valley.



Out birding with Jonny

PHOTO: JONNY GENTLE

The first point will always be to try different habitat types. We have well established deciduous and coniferous woodland, pasture and arable fields in a very short distance.

At the start of the road, there are large "Standard" trees, lining steep sided banks, covered in dense foliage. Brilliant cover and a wide range of structure for various bird species. Expect to see **Thrush** species, **Tits**, **Great Spotted Woodpecker**, **Goldfinch** and **Chaffinch**. Progress further along the road and check the dense, wide, hedgerows for **Sparrows**, **Wren**, **Robin** and **Blackcap**. Listen to the surrounding close-cropped pasture for the laughing call of the **Green**

Woodpecker. A quick walk to Upper Common can sometimes yield **Red-Legged Partridge** on ploughed fields

After spring migration, from May onwards expect to find **Swallow**, **House Martin** around the houses and **Spotted Flycatcher** in the open parts of the wooded valley. Farmland towards the end of the road has always been very good for Corvid species like **Carion Crow**, **Magpie** and **Raven**, as well as **Mistle Thrush**, **Linnet** and **Pheasant**. If you look to the skies as you walk it can be easy enough to pick up **Sparrowhawk**, **Buzzard** and the occasional **Red Kite**, perhaps a **Goshawk**.

Keep your eyes peeled. Follow any movement you see and don't write off any species until you've had a chance to get a set of binoculars on it!

Time of day can make a huge difference too. It's a well known fact that birds are early risers, making the most out of the daylight hours to find food, and establish territories. Increase your chances of finding more species by getting up early. It's a sure-fire way to set yourself up for success.

You may like to start making a list of what you see each time you go out. Try it at different times of year to see which

Butterflies need nectar throughout the year to recover from hibernation, fly, find a mate and breed. With thoughtful planting, we can provide food to attract and sustain butterflies so they can produce the next generation. Primrose, buddleia, verbena, lavender, wallflowers are just a few examples of butterfly favourites.



Large White CONSERVATION STATUS ●

PHOTO: LYN DUNBAR

Of course, feeding butterflies is only part of the story. They need places to lay eggs and the resulting caterpillars need to survive and pupate to complete the life cycle. Caterpillars in our garden are not always welcome. They need specific plants to eat and these are often crops we would like for ourselves. (The **Large White** caterpillar eating my brassicas for example!). Using pesticides may save our greens but they are further contributing to the decline of the butterfly so this year I am trying something different. I have planted aromatic herbs (thyme and basil) amongst the brassicas to disguise their smell and I have planted nasturtiums as an alternative food source for the **Large White** caterpillars. I have also provided some space for other caterpillar foods - nettles (**Peacock**, **Red**

Admiral), thistles (**Painted Lady**) and ivy (**Holly Blue**). This year I will celebrate my caterpillars!

My young grandson recently told me that butterflies only live for a day. Actually, most live for several weeks. However, without our help, many species of butterfly may not be around for him to enjoy for even a day in the years to come. Small changes in our gardens have the potential to make a big difference!

Lyn Dunbar



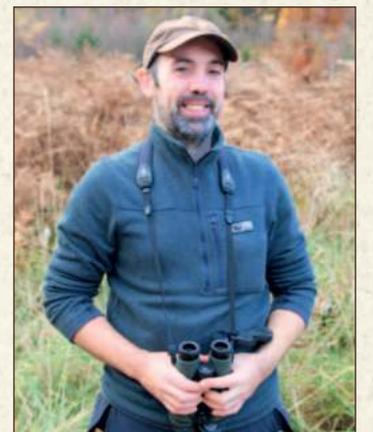
Peacock CONSERVATION STATUS ●

PHOTO: LYN DUNBAR

[If you would like to get involved in gardening for the conservation of butterflies, visit www.butterfly-conservation.org which provides comprehensive lists of plants which will sustain butterflies and their caterpillars throughout the year].

UK BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION STATUS EXPLAINED

2022 RED LIST	SPECIES
● Regionally extinct	(4)
● Critically endangered	(0)
● Endangered	(8)
● Vulnerable	(16)
● Near threatened	(5)
● Least concern	(29)



species are likely to be migratory and which are resident.

As you start to spot more bird species the first foray into bird ID can be intimidating but, given a few focussed visits to the same site, you can learn where you're likely to see certain species and this can aid the process. Grab yourself a decent bird book, *Collins* produce a brilliant photographic guide, and get swatting!

Jonny Gentle
fodwildlifetours@gmail.com

Junior Watch



Intrepid young birdwatchers!

Can you name these two birds?

To enter, just ask your parents to email us with your answer(s) to aylburtonnaturewatch@gmail.com with your name.

Correct answers will be put into a draw and the winner will receive £5!

(Closing date: 31st July 2022).



UK BIRD CONSERVATION STATUS EXPLAINED

In the UK our birds are graded into three conservation categories that are changing constantly:

- **The Red List** - The most critical.
- **The Amber List** - The next most critical.
- **The Green List** - The least critical.
- **Introduced** - Escaped, non-native species that have bred in the wild, with no conservation status.

The lapwing

I remember as a young boy in the 1960's Aylburton had a good population of lapwing.

In those days I would not have heard of a Lapwing as we always referred to them as *Peewits* (so named from the call they make.)

The fields between the playing fields and the railway line were mostly small fields bordered by hedgerows. The fields themselves were always waterlogged during winter, so much so, that it was almost impossible to walk through them. It wasn't until the spring that they would dry out and produce an abundance of wild flowers and wildlife including numerous lapwing nests. My next door neighbour, the late Geoff Watkins would search for their nests and report his findings to the British Trust for Ornithology.

Sadly those days have gone. The government in the 60's funded farmers to rip out hedgerows and drain water meadows to produce large easy to manage fields for arable and livestock use, in so doing destroying the habitat for so many species of flora and fauna.

The lapwing is instantly recognisable being the only British wader that supports a crest. They nest on the ground usually laying four eggs which are incubated for 25-34 days. The chicks are covered in down and can run and feed within hours of hatching.

Unfortunately lapwing numbers have declined by 80% since the 1960's.

However we still have a few which can be seen between Aylburton and Woolaston mostly on the river side of the railway line. I would be interested to know of any still breeding in the parish.

Martin Vaisey



Drawing: Martin Vaisey



Photo: Stephanie Molyneux

steph@captive-art.co.uk



www.apexarchitectureltd.com

GLOUCESTERSHIRE
01594 516 161
Oak House,
Aylburton Business Centre,
Aylburton, Lydney GL15 6ST

MONMOUTHSHIRE
01600 800 101
Wyastone Leys,
Wyastone Business Park,
Monmouth NP25 3SR

CHELTENHAM
01242 650 980

