

BIRD-LIFE IN THE WYCHWOODS

Many of the birds that are winter visitors to Oxfordshire had left for their breeding ranges when the snow of late February struck. This cold week certainly brought the birds back to my garden bird-table, and for a day a Hawfinch stayed in the garden hedge.

The Hawfinch has a stout beak with which it cracks the hard seed cases of such fruits as haws and even cherry-stones. Every summer Hawfinches are recorded from Boars Hill, near Oxford, where they feed on the kernels of the cherry-stones. Our bird fed on the kernels of the few remaining haws and also on the seeds of the hedge maple trees.

Hawfinches live in Wychwood Forest, but it is a rare event for them to wander into the surrounding countryside. Being rather secretive and usually keeping to dense woodland, little is known about their detailed distribution and numbers in Oxfordshire.

Another noticeable feature of the cold spell was the way in which the large, red, juicy fruits of the guelder rose-bushes in my garden were quickly eaten by the Missel Thrushes. Six were present, but normally only a pair are to be found in my garden. The fruits of some plants are not favoured by our birds but they prove a useful reserve at the end of the winter.

Spring is here and already many birds are nesting. The Rooks have the problem of finding suitable sites, now that so many Elm trees have been lost. Some Rooks are now nesting in Elder bushes and last year three pairs nested on an electricity pylon opposite the Southern Electricity Board complex at Yarnton.

J.M. Campbell

(Perhaps readers might care to send me any interesting observations so that they can be used in future contributions?

Editor)

25 YEARS SERVICE TO THE PARISH

We would like to add our thanks to Mrs Winifred White, who at the January Meeting of the Shipton Parish Council, received from the hands of the Chairman a gift of an engraved glass goblet to mark the completion of 25 years as Clerk to the Council.