

# Briantspuddle Wildlife News No.5

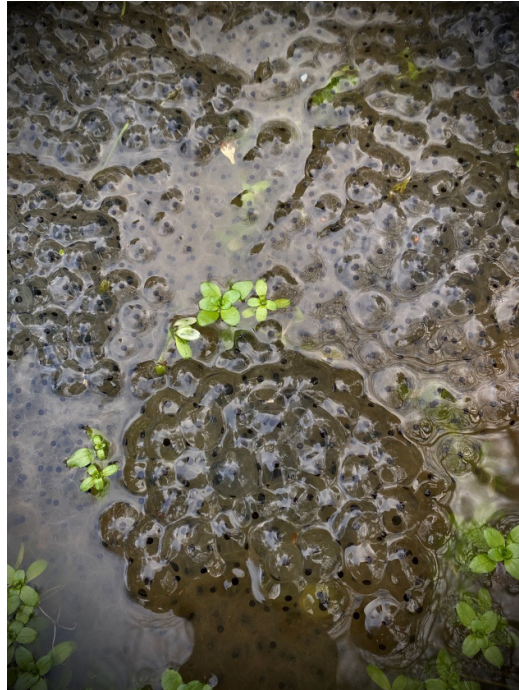
Please keep sending your wildlife news, as long as it is within the parish of Affpuddle, Briantspuddle, Throop and Turnerspuddle

Firstly a special item of news from the south of France near the Spanish border on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2026 the very first Swift was seen heading northwards and also 107 Swallows. Then on the 25<sup>th</sup> March another single Swift and 1027 Swallows. So not long to wait now although our Swifts are not due till the end of April/early May.

## **Wildlife Snippet**

While walking from Throop to Briantspuddle yesterday, in one of the many deep puddles stretching over halfway across the road I saw a little head poking above the water. It proved to be a mole, swimming strongly from one side of the puddle to the other. It emerged from the water and scuttled rapidly across the road and up the opposite bank, looking a little disorientated as it tried to find its way through the brambles at the base of the hedge. It eventually found a way through to the meadow beyond and disappeared across the grass at great speed, apparently none the worse for its immersion. It all happened so quickly that unfortunately I was not able to get to my phone in time to take a picture.

I imagine the mole's big, shovel-like front feet are just as useful for swimming as they are for digging, though I doubt that they often have to try them out in water. If, as I suspect, the mole had been forced out of its home by the flood water, I hope it was soon able to set up another residence in the higher ground it was sensibly aiming for!



Frogspawn, Piddle Wood Pond

## Lesser Redpoll

A short article on one of our winter bird visitors - the LESSER REDPOLL. According to the R.S.P.B and the B.T.O the population of REDPOLLS in BRITAIN is around TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTY THOUSAND, although that sounds a lot, they are still on the list of HIGH CONSERVATION CONCERN.



Some years we get good winter numbers, and then numbers are low like this year. They will migrate to the continent if the weather here is not so good. They start moving back north in the middle of March as they make their way up to the north of England, Scotland and Wales where they breed. We also get migrants from Scandinavia and they will return to breed in the spring. This year I have only found a small flock of 11 feeding on the buds of the Birch tree, one of their favourite trees along with Alder, but they did stay for a while so I saw them several times. They mix with Siskins so if you get Siskins on your bird table keep an eye out for Redpoll. Happy hunting.



Woodlark and Brimstone Butterfly

The only other news is a pair of WOODLARKS singing on ERICA TRUST LAND. 25<sup>th</sup> February a nice 15 degrees and my first Butterflies for this year while walking the heath with 9 Brimstone flying and 1 Peacock.



Sparrowhawk

What are your thoughts on the Sparrowhawk, always seen as the villain because he swoops into our gardens and takes the odd bird. Nobody likes to see little birds taken, but that's the way it is. It only takes enough food to keep it going, does not kill for the sake of it. Enjoy it when it comes in the garden, admire the speed and agility to turn on a sixpence and change direction in an instant. I have been in the garden and it has flown straight past me fully focused on its victim, such tenacity. I have watched it displaying near its nest site and what a display, it flies up and then down from a good height at great speed, and when it reaches the bottom of its dive you think is it going to stop, but it does, and shoots straight back up again and repeats this a number of times, a great thing to see. So the next time admire it for what it is, a hunter.



Some early Bluebells

## Fungi



Hmmm, this has passed its prime and become a rather gelatinous mass, without the foliaceous structure of fresh *Phaeotremella foliacea*. In this state I can't rule out Witches Butter *Exidia glandulosa*, which also ends up looking like this and is much commoner.

Unfortunately, these jelly fungi tend to end up looking similar as they deteriorate.

**Ian Cross.**

## Daffodils in Briantspuddle Woods

These wild type daffodils, donated as bulbs to The Erica Trust by the Parish Council several years ago, continue to establish themselves in Briantspuddle Woods. These more delicate blooms have replaced the cultivated varieties planted to commemorate the World Wars, but are still known as 'Lady Debenhams' daffodils'.



Lady Debenhams' Daffodils



1 of 5 Red Kites over Briantspuddle

## Snowflakes

To think this area was under two feet of water not long ago and now the SNOWFLAKES are out in flower, nature is wonderful.



Snowflakes in flower

With thanks to Roger Hewitt, Lesley Haskins, Simon Goddard, Jane Courtier, Ian Cross, Campbell de Burgh, and Peter Talbot.