

# Chudleigh Wild Christmas Newsletter 2020



## We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

We would like to thank all our members who have contributed to the purchase of trees and helped with the weeding, planting, sowing, raking, brush cutting, apple crushing and many other tasks that we have carried out this year. Although it's been a difficult year for so many, we feel that it's been a very productive one for Chudleigh Wild and we look forward Spring 2021 and seeing the fruits of our labours.

### Talk and AGM - 21 January 2021

We would like to invite you to our online talk and AGM, which will take place via Zoom on 21 January 2021. A brief AGM will be followed by a series of short talks to update you on the many exciting things that Chudleigh Wild is doing to promote, learn about and preserve our wildlife and get our community engaged in the wonderful countryside around us. Please do join us with your mug of coffee or tea or wine and nibbles. That's the benefit of talks on Zoom!



### Co-op Community Fund

We are delighted that Chudleigh Wild has been chosen to benefit from the Co-op Local Community

Fund. At a time when funds for community groups and charitable organisations are becoming more difficult to access, we're incredibly grateful for this opportunity to make a real difference in Chudleigh.

We are working to improve the management of our verges and green spaces, supporting and increasing our local wildlife. We plan to use the money raised to create a nature trail around Chudleigh's green spaces, using rubbing plaques and information boards to educate and connect our community with our local nature.

Please select us as your local cause by visiting <https://membership.coop.co.uk/causes/52914>

Bobby Hughes

## Wildlife in Lockdown 2

Wildlife watchers in Chudleigh have started to focus a little more on home terrain in recent weeks. Birds figured most prominently, as most other wildlife became less obvious.

A high altitude flock of 40 presumably wild geese flew over on 6 November, when dozens of winter thrushes – Redwings and Fieldfares – reoriented themselves north-eastwards after a foggy night. Flocks of these have also been seen feasting on the fruit at Deer Park Farm and eating worms in pasture near Mistletoe Farm. Redwings have also been eating berries in the Oldway Batfields hedgerows.

Sparrowhawks and Goshawks have been seen displaying lately, and a Goshawk (rightly) caused consternation among Woodpigeons and Starlings as it cruised over Lawn Drive.



Fieldfare



Goosanders

A few Goosanders, fish-eating ducks of the 'sawbill' family, breed on South Devon's rivers, including the Teign. However, in winter, they shift allegiance to lakes and on 10 December, three birds (two males) joined the Little Grebes



Little Grebe

and Moorhens on the pools at Watercress Farm. The alders there attracted an exceptionally large flock of 90 Siskins.

Moorhens and Little Grebes were among over 400 Mallard visible from the roadside recently at Ugbrooke, large numbers of which are reared and released there. The Pheasants reared at Ugbooke soon wander and find good feeding areas in the few autumn-sown cereal crops and stubbles near the edge of town, with dozens to be seen eating the grain and weed seeds.

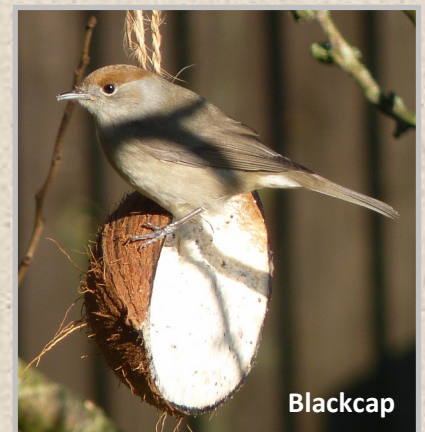


Black Redstart

Black Redstarts move into southern England in late autumn from the Continent, perhaps seeking refuge in milder climes when montane breeding sites become inhospitable. One appeared briefly on a Twindle Beer rooftop on 19 November. Some of the Stonechats that breed in the heathy bits of Haldon move to lower ground in winter, and on 24

November a separate male and female were seen in the Kerswell area.

Garden feeders are attracting good numbers of Goldfinches, with a record 26 in one garden, as well as helping to fatten up Chudleigh's healthy population of House Sparrows. The first Blackcap arrived in early December from central Europe: they love to eat our exotic garden berries and fat-balls.



Blackcap

Dave Smallshire



## Lockdown for wildlife

It's getting gradually colder as we approach Christmas and, although the temperature still fluctuates, some of our mammals will have gone into lockdown for the winter.

A few bats can still be seen feeding on warmer nights, but many will have gone into winter hibernation. This is known as torpor, where they reduce their body temperature and metabolic rate to conserve energy and allow them to sleep through the winter without feeding. With our warmer winters, many do not enter true hibernation and can wake to warm up and feed, when conditions allow, and then return to this torpid state if necessary.

My Hedgehog stopped visiting his feeding station during the last cold spell and is now asleep in his 'Chudleigh Hog House' courtesy of Jonathan, who makes these sturdy houses.

Dormice leave their summer nests and head for the ground, where they construct a small, tightly woven nest with thicker walls, to make it waterproof. Again, with climate change, they may stay awake longer into the winter months and are sometimes seen on bird tables and bird feeders. On several occasions they have been rescued from inside feeders, having eaten so much that they can't get out!

*Sue Smallshire*



## Volunteering opportunities

There are many winter tasks to be carried out, including habitat management and planting as well as litter picking. As we often do this at short notice, in order to pick the nicer weather, we have set up a WhatsApp group so that we can alert volunteers if we are planning to go out.

We will also be surveying bats again in the Spring, so if you would like to learn how to use a bat detector and help us to record them or join our WhatsApp group, please contact Sue [suesmallshire@gmail.com](mailto:suesmallshire@gmail.com)

