



Bristol Naturalists' Society

Registered Charity No. 235494

Wildlife News: Week 03 – January 21st 2008

Weather

Another warm week at 10.9C, almost identical to last year, causing the year-to-date figure to rise to 9.5C, well above the long-term average of 7.3C for January. The twelve months figure has stuck at 12.5C, as this January so far is very similar to last.

It has been the wettest week of the year so far with 76mm of rain, bringing the monthly total so far to 155mm, 80% above the whole month average. The total for the last twelve months 1123mm. The total has already topped last year's total, and is currently 8th wettest January since 1853, and just 20mm below the record of 175mm set in 1995.

It has also been a very sunless week with a grand total of 1.9 hours so far. The month as a whole has had just half its normal sunshine.

Spring

As last year Daffodil stems are now almost 6cm above ground, and the buds are clear of the leaves. Crocus and Snowdrop are out but without sun not luxuriant, and celandine are few and far between. Wood Spurge has just come into flower- I don't seem to have recorded it last year. However new Dog's Mercury stems have yet to appear, and last years old ones are still prominent. In Filton I found fresh new leaves of both Hawthorn and Hazel, and white Sallow flower buds that had broken from their sheaths, but were not yet in flower. The wet weather has prevented me getting out much, so there may have been changes that I have missed .

Frogspawn

Last year the first record was January 11th, but I have had not yet this year However I have found two clasped frogs in my pond though without result yet, so please keep a close eye. Also please this year try to count the maximum number in your pond and let me know. As they are very sensitive to anyone around- vanishing at any shadow, or indeed footfall nearby, it is worth using the trick of a friend- he counts through binoculars from an upstairs window. He has had very varying figures over the past decade, since establishing the pond, and I would be very grateful for any other counts.

Big garden birdwatch

The RSPB's annual garden birdwatch weekend is Jan 26/27th It is easy to get involved via their website, www.rspb.org, and the larger the number of participants the greater the value of the results. Although they seem to show little change from year to year, as time goes by the event will monitor the changes that are occurring in bird use of our gardens. The local survey, supported by forty stalwarts has shown very dramatic changes over thirty years, of which the most significant is a fourfold growth in the avian biomass supported by gardens. As food available in the countryside declines, so the importance of garden feeding grows. The BTO also has a garden bird-0watch scheme which involves counting throughout the year, and reveals the complex patterns of garden use.

BTO Atlas

The dreadful weather has prevented any recent additions to the Atlas totals. Anyone wishing to be involved with tetrad surveys can still opt for them by going to the website www.birdatlas.net. They will do the survey in the breeding season, April to July, and then do the winter survey next winter.

Breeding Bird Survey

This survey annual survey monitors the population of all our common species. It involves two walks during the breeding season, of exactly 2km, through a 1-km square, counting all species seen or heard. Last year 210 squares in the region were covered. If you are interested, and would like to attend a training morning on Saturday 15 March, contact John Tully at johntully4@aol.com

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