



Bristol Naturalists' Society

Registered Charity No. 235494

Wildlife News: Week 14 – April 07th 2010

A happy and cold Easter to all my readers.

Weather

Recently the first week in April has usually been warm, whereas the second is usually cold. This year the first week and the Easter break have been miserably cold, as despite the winds coming from the south, they have originated in the arctic as there is a powerful area of high pressure over Greenland, with cold northerly winds pouring out of it, and then turning into mini depressions over the UK. It was cold enough for snow over Scotland, and produced one night of frost in Bristol. So far this year we have only had one week which was above the recent average.

Average temperature for the week was 12.1C. Since 1997 the maximum for the week was 16.1 in 2007 and the minimum 9.6 in 2000. Year-to-date is 7.2C and the last twelve months stays at 13.4C

Onset of spring

I have data on 43 events back to 2003, and this year the average date of these is day 74. In 2007 the same events had an average date of day 48, and the average since 2003 is day 55. In other words this spring is still 19 days later than normal, and is later than the previous latest spring in 2006, which had a notably cold March.

However I found Ash, Forget-me-not, Ivy-leaved Toadflax, and Bristol Rock Cress all in flower on the Downs on Sunday. Beech buds are breaking as are Silver Birch, Hornbeam, and Balsam Poplar.

To Look out for this week Blackthorn, Wild Cherry, Red Valerian, Laurel, Marsh Marigold, Honesty, Bluebell

Impact of winter.

I was concerned a few weeks ago that the cold winter might have damaged Wren populations, but now that they have begun to sing in earnest I think my fears were unfounded. The numbers on my standard walk are the same as normal for the week.

Rook Survey.

We are carrying out a total count of the rookeries in the region, and the first few results have come in, all showing a decline on the last survey in 2005. Counts in ST58 and ST66, with the same observers as in 2000, show a fall of 39% from that year. Since 1972 when our counts began there have been an average of 7000 nests, but numbers increased from 5400 nests to a peak of 8000 in 1985 and have fallen back to 6000 in 2005. If these early results are repeated the total this year may be back to around 5000. As Britain holds

40% of the world population of Rooks outside Russia a declining population is a matter for concern. The current BTO Atlas survey should indicate whether our local problem is widespread or not.

Swift Survey this summer.

We will be repeating last summer's Swift survey, but hoping for better weather. The survey requires observers to note low-level screaming Swift parties in the evening between June 15th and July 15th, as that is a good indication of nesting sites.

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