



Kempshott Conservation Group e-Newsletter

Welcome to the new slim-line monthly edition of our newsletter. We hope to cover news in a more timely fashion, attempt to broaden the subject matter we report on as well as pointing out what could be seen in the coming month.

Nature Notes



In focus - Redwing & Fieldfare

A sure sign that winter is just around the corner is the long dark evenings and the arrival of the winter thrushes; the Redwing and Fieldfare, from Scandinavia and Russia during September and November.

The birds flock to take advantage of our relatively mild winters and the autumnal hedgerow abundance of berries. Some may just be passing through on their journey to Spain, Portugal and even to North Africa, to return the following spring.



Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

The smallest of our thrushes the Redwing is easy to identify with its cream eye-stripe and rufous flanks and underwing. It is a common and widespread winter migrant, though a few do breed in Scotland. They migrate at night and on a clear evening you can listen for their 'seep' contact call as they fly overhead. ♂♀ are similar and omnivorous foraging for invertebrates supplemented by berries; particularly Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). They are very susceptible to harsh weather and have a typical lifespan of 2

years. Average arrival 27 Sept. Average departure 22 Apr. Status: **Schedule 1 Red**

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

A large bird similar in size to the Mistle Thrush, the wintering birds often accompany the Redwings. The Fieldfare is also a nocturnal migrant feeding in fields and open country. ♀♂ are similar and also omnivorous, with a typical lifespan of 2 years. Distinguished from the Mistle and Song Thrush in flight by its white underwing and its blue-grey head and nape. It has a heavily speckled breast; ochre flanks and a chestnut back. A rare breeder in the UK. Very vocal with a loud 'chack-chack' call. The Fieldfare is particularly pugnacious in defending its nest often by bombarding intruders with its faeces, smaller birds often nest nearby for added protection. Average arrival 29 Sept. Average departure 29 Apr. Status: **Schedule 1 Red**



Schedule 1 of the UK Wildlife and Countryside Act **Red** listed as Birds of Conservation Concern

Bird Boxes in the Meadow

Our normal cycle for bird boxes is to take them down in autumn for an inspection. This allows us to record whether they were used, or not, to have a guess at what species used the box and to see if there were any eggs that did not hatch as well as giving them a good clean. We also do a visual inspection to see if they have been "vandalised" by squirrels! Any damaged boxes are replaced with a new or refurbished one, fitted with a metal plate around the entrance hole to prevent such vandalism! Additional boxes may be put up any time over the winter period, but traditionally, bird boxes should be in place by the 14th of February, Valentines Day!

Results for 2013

Despite the lack of insects and caterpillars earlier this year; five out of eight boxes were used by Blue Tits and Great Tits, all broods fledged successfully. The nests contained, along with the moss and grass, a large quantity of hair from my dog - obviously a good insulator and excellent way to recycle! The remaining three boxes that were unused have now been replaced with deeper ones and re-located.

Whilst cleaning the boxes at the end of the season, it was discovered that one box had obviously attracted the attention of a squirrel. Not only had the entrance hole been enlarged from 28mm to approximately the size of a tennis ball; the squirrel had built a nest for itself on top of the used nest of a Great Tit.

Amphibians in the Meadow!

Back in September you may have seen a series of "mats" that had been put down all across the Meadow. This was a survey to see if we had any existing amphibians. If amphibians need to be relocated due to housing developments, they need to go to sites where the existing population is either low or non-existent, to prevent competition for food, etc. We met the lady doing the survey and to our surprise discovered she had found slow worms! Slow Worms (*Anguis fragilis*) are neither slow nor worms! They are not even technically snakes, being a form of legless lizard! It's good to know that we have these amphibians using the Meadow!

Work Parties for December and beyond -

Date	Meeting Point
Thursday, 5 December	Old Hedgerow. Footpath between Coniston Road and Down Grange (Behind 77-155 Coniston Road)
Sunday, 15 December	Down Grange Meadow. Homesteads Road interpretation board
Thursday, 9th January	Old Orchard, Kendal Gardens
Sunday, 19th January	Old Hedgerow—see above
Thursday, 30th January	Down Grange Meadow—see above

*If you would like to join us for the first time please ring **Marion** on **470171**.*

Contact us by e-mail on kempshott-conservation@tiscali.co.uk or via the website www.kempshotconservationgroup.org.uk. For anything that requires urgent action, such as fallen trees on any of our sites, etc., please contact **Marion** Wolstencroft on **470171**.