

## Beacon Hill LNR

# Newsletter No 22

Winter 2017-18

### Note on Beacon Hill Birds, November 2017- Early April 2018

Nov-Dec Regrettably no records were received for this period. It is likely our resident Skylark families will have moved off to spend the winter on agricultural land.

Jan 17 A brief visit where 3 Skylarks were back on territory and singing from the ground due to the strong wind. Also a Meadow Pipit noted.

Jan 31 Two Grey Herons were seen flying over to the east by Amanda.

Feb 6 Jay reported a hovering Kestrel and a few Skylarks.

Feb 22 Although a cold wind, the sunshine had brought out the Skylarks in good numbers. At least 6-8 singing males were noted and over a dozen birds scattered over the area. Buzzards were heard mewing from South Wood.

Mar 1 Jay reported a few Lapwings heading north over the Hill. Amanda saw 3 Lapwings in the grass to the east of the windmill and another 3 in the horse paddocks. With snow and cold weather currently in the area it is not unusual to see movements of plovers or winter thrushes escaping the bad conditions or taking temporary shelter.

Mar 3 John reported 6 Lapwing in Hilder's Field.

Mar 26 Barbara saw a **Red Kite** in Ovingdean today. The last week of March is the optimum time for Kite movement with around half a dozen seen this day to the west of Brighton, and a few over Brighton in the previous days. These are most likely young birds from the UK and roving around, or possibly migrating from Europe. Jay noted 2 Cormorants flying over.

Mar 27 The Friends of Beacon Hill put up 16 bird nestboxes in North Wood last year, some of which were used. Today a Blue Tit was using Box13. We have to thank Fred (Finnebar) Daly from Ovingdean who made all these boxes, and who sadly passed away recently. Weathering of the boxes should show an increase in nesting in 2018.

Mar 29 Two cock Pheasants were seen on the hill today by Libby, who also heard a woodpecker.



Apr 3 This morning a noisy cock Pheasant was in the allotments. In South Wood Buzzard and Stock Dove were heard. Over the hill 7-8 singing Skylarks and a Meadow Pipit. It was disappointing with no spring migrants. Although most pass through from mid-month, there are generally a few early sightings of Wheatear, Chiffchaff or Willow Warbler.



Skylark hunkering down in the wind

## Miscellaneous

January Very few sightings were reported during this month, but Amanda had an exciting, but all too brief, sighting of a Stoat at the top of Hog Plat.

Feb 1 Some excellent news from Libby when she spotted a Brown Hare on the Hill. Since my involvement with these Nature Notes, this is the first sighting and very unusual as they normally tend to inhabit farmland.

Feb 22 The late strimming of the woodland edge of the woods may have some effect later, and it will be interesting to see whether the Spanish Bluebells and other plants might suffer. I could see no early flowering of Lesser Celandine, but there were clumps of Snowdrop in the old allotment area and nearby some Spring Starflower.



Snowdrops



Spring Starflower

Feb 27 The first snowfalls of the winter. This superb photo taken by Jay Butler:



Mar 6 Not often photographed, the 'unsung hero' of our reserve and natural recycler, is always present. This Lobworm was found by Jay and measured about 30cms length.



Mar 18 More snow, but our grazing sheep are pretty hardy:



Mar 26 Jay spotted the first butterfly of the year - a Peacock on the Hill this morning.

Apr 3 All the plants are around a fortnight later than usual with Cowslips still in bud, and very few Alexanders, Blackthorn or Lesser Celandine in flower. The sheep have been grazing in a large area towards the north of the reserve, and will be moved on soon to another area. They benefit the grassland and this photo shows plenty of nest material for the birds:



Apr 6 Well done Jay in spotting the second butterfly of the year - a Small Tortoiseshell this afternoon. Although sunny the windy conditions were far from favourable.

It has been a somewhat disappointing period and hopefully there will be more to report next time.

Thanks for contributions from Jay Butler, Amanda Connolly, John Cumming, Libby Darling, and Barbara Gunn.  
Compiled by Peter Whitcomb