



# Mentmore Parish Council

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## Wildlife 2016

Wildlife Spring 2016 by Steve Thomas

I was aware I’d been remiss in keeping up my wildlife notes, but chastened when I realised it’s been a full year since I last wrote. I could plead pressure of work, but let’s forget the excuses and just see if I can make up for lost time.

First let’s take a look back to the second half of 2015. I ended my last report with shots of **deer**, so let’s start with another one, this time from July, almost a year ago. This is a **muntjac**, the well-known “barking deer” which we often hear in the woods close to the house and which many villagers must have seen darting across the roads locally.



Muntjac Deer by Steve Thomas

Later in the summer the meadow near the cricket club plays home to a variety of insects, and this shot of a **hoverfly** pleased me as it also shows the shed 'skin' (actually the exoskeleton) of another insect dangling from a buttercup. Anyone who can identify the insect, please let me know! In searching for some reference material, I found my way to Wikipedia (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecdysis>) which pleasingly illustrates the process using a series of images of a southern hawker dragonfly. Take a look then hold that thought when you come back!





Come autumn I managed to get a shot of a **red-legged partridge** which visited my garden, but then I must have put the camera away for a while as the next offering I have was taken during the mid-January snows, this time of a **nuthatch**. Happily we have recently seen a pair of nuthatch visiting our garden feeders – they're not a rarity as a solo visitor but to see a pair together, evidently nesting locally, has not been so common.



Red-legged Partridge by Steve Thomas







I have mentioned previously that we are involved with the Bucks Owl & Raptor Group (<http://www.giveahoot.org.uk/>), which has used some of my images. We were trawling the photo archive in February looking for a shot of a **kestrel** for their new brochure, and coming up with nothing very suitable when, by one of those odd coincidences life throws at you sometimes, an obliging kestrel showed up in and around the garden for a few days. The shot I show here is not the one we used in the brochure, but I did get a useable shot for it, so do go hunt out a copy for yourself!



Kestrel by Steve Thomas

Before spring fully arrived I managed a few distant shots of **Chinese water deer**, the one shown here probably the best of a poor bunch.





Chinese Water Deer by Steve Thomas

The spring did finally come and our garden pond sprang into life with **frogs** spawning and, a real treat, a **mistle thrush** pair set up a nest in the forked branches of a tree next door. We watched it closely for some time but sadly they failed to raise a brood and the nest was abandoned after only a couple of weeks.





Frog by Steve Thomas





Mistle Thrush by Steve Thomas

One of the side-effects of feeding smaller garden birds – we’ve had the usual **tits (blue, great, long-tailed)**, **robin**, **chaffinch**, **dunnock** and so on along with larger birds like **collared dove**, **wood pigeon**, **maggie** and **jackdaw** – is that the presence of small birds also attracts predators. While not everyone likes to see the birds they’ve attracted become a meal for something else, I defy anyone not to be impressed by the sight of a **sparrowhawk**. We had brief glimpses of a male and, just once, managed to catch it on camera albeit at the far end of the garden so more a record shot than anything else.





Sparrowhawk by Steve Thomas

To bring this up to date, I am writing this on the first full weekend in June and am pleased to report that this weekend we have seen, somewhat earlier than last year, the first **southern hawker dragonfly** emerging from its larval form above our garden pond. Feel free to compare my shot with those on Wikipedia!





Southern Hawker Dragonfly by Steve Thomas



Southern Hawker Dragonfly by Steve Thomas



Finally a walk on the Horton side of the village this weekend led us to a pair of **reed bunting** obviously feeding a youngster, probably still in the nest. I went back with the camera and got the shot (of the female) you see here, though not staying too long as the birds were obviously well aware of my presence and were being very cautious about approaching the nest site – especially the male who stayed largely out of photographic range.



Reed Bunting by Steve Thomas

That brings me up to date and I will endeavour not to wait another twelve months for the next instalment!

Comments

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