

Newnham Birds January 2023

As the days lengthen, the birds become more active and more apparent in Paradise. The **Rooks** and **Jackdaws**, whose combined flock numbers about 400-500, swirl about the sky at dawn and dusk with great joy and noisiness. If you want to see this spectacle, 7-7.30am and 4.30-5.00pm are the times to go. **Paradise Island** tall trees are a sub-roost where they gather in the morning, discuss the day's plans, disappear, re-assemble in the evening and fly around for about 30 minutes before settling down for the night. Soon they will disperse to

nesting sites - indeed, I notice rooks are already patching up their nests - and Paradise Island will be taken over by the returning **Herons**. Last year, they had 10-12 nests and I have spotted a couple of birds flying over to check if the corvids had gone yet.

Throughout the year, I do a weekly breakfast back garden bird count. The garden is small, but there is a view of taller trees, including a Cypress, a large Birch tree and the big trees of Paradise Island. Recently there have been notable absences - no **Chaffinches** or **Greenfinches**, previously so regular. **Goldfinches** are doing better - a flock of about 40 were

feeding in the birch tree recently. Small bird numbers are down generally, but 2 **Robins** turned up this week, as well as a **Wren**, a **Dunnock** and a couple of **Great Tits**. **Blue Tits** and **Blackbirds** are regulars, but I have not heard a **Song Thrush** yet. **Magpies** nested in the cypress tree last year (I love them, even though they take the odd fledgling blue tit). Both parents and one offspring are still around and regular feeders at the bird table. **Jays** are occasional and shy visitors. A pair of **Carrion Crows** can only be assumed, when they call after the rooks have left for the day.

Woodpigeons are invariably seen or heard and one sulky individual is currently sitting on the fence - a target for a passing **Sparrowhawk**, should she return today. **Collared Doves** have gone - the last I recorded was August 2022. A small group of **Feral Pigeons** live down the road, but they do not visit me. **Stock Doves** don't come either, but I hear their Uuhh Uuhh call most weeks, coming from the direction of Paradise. Equally, while I both see and hear **Great Spotted Woodpeckers**, **Green Woodpeckers** are never seen but frequently heard. **Starlings** come in great numbers in the winter, and are present throughout the year.

I was about to bemoan the loss of **Long Tailed Tits**, but as I look up from writing, there is a flock of half a dozen, together with blue tits, great tits and also a **Chaffinch**, visiting the fat balls and searching the eaves for spiders. Hooray. They all look sprightly in spring plumage. The Eltisley Avenue breakfast bar is trending.



Some birds are spotted as they pass through. A **Sparrowhawk** this morning, an occasional **Buzzard** or **Kestrel**, or a glimpse of a **Red Kite** always livens up the morning. Some are passing up and down the river: **Cormorants**, **Mallards**, **Black-headed Gulls** are often seen in transit and **Canada Geese** can be heard.

March should bring the spring migrants - **Chiffchaff** and **Swifts** are the only ones I have seen from the garden, but Paradise will have **Willow Warblers** and **Blackcaps** as well. A **Cuckoo** would be a great bonus – last year, one stayed around for weeks. When you walk through the reserve, you will already hear the spring song of **Robins**, **Wren** and **Great Tit**. Also there is a very handsome male **Shoveler** on the lake! A new observation for the reserve. I will try and do a dawn chorus walk in March, for anyone who wants to get up early!

Olwen Williams olwenw@gmail.com