

# Warwick Natural History Society

## Snippets

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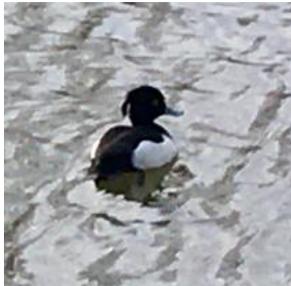
The Society is now on Twitter! Follow us on [@WarwickNatHist](https://twitter.com/WarwickNatHist)

### *Water vole recovery - volunteers needed!*

*The Canal & River Trust is undertaking a Water Vole recovery project with the object of improving water vole habitat along our West Midlands canals and producing a recovery action plan for this species.*

*Chloe Walker is the new Water Vole Recovery Project Officer and would love to have some help with co-ordinating surveys, as well as habitat improvement and managing vegetation. Anyone interested in helping with this project can contact Chloe directly on:*

[Chloe.Walker@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:Chloe.Walker@canalrivertrust.org.uk).



This morning there was a Tufted Duck on the Avon in St. Nick's Park. Not a rare bird but very unusual here. I think the last time one turned up in St. Nick's was 6 years ago.

10th February RT

*The field with a footpath east of Pleasance Farm hasn't been ploughed this year and is covered with vetch and stitchwort. As a result, even in mid-February, skylarks are soaring overhead. I haven't noticed them there before.* 10th February MP

I have had suggestions that my mystery duck with a pom pom on its head might be a Crested Cayuga Duck, a Wild Crested Duck or domestic Black Indian Runner Duck crossed with a Mallard. Take your pick! 10th February FW

*Kenilworth HS2 – security man advised us they would be on site for six years!* DR



A lovely walk round the reservoirs at Barnt Green today with Hazel catkins adding a splash of colour to the hedgerows.

Great Crested Grebe seen on the Upper Bittell Reservoir, together with the ever-present Coots.

11th February RW





*A colourful visitor to the garden this morning to see what's on offer underneath the bird table.*

*A snowdrop morning at Hatton Church was well attended today.*



*After viewing the beautiful array of Snowdrops in the churchyard, about 60 people warmed up with coffee and cake in the Church followed by a talk on Snowdrops.  
12th February      LW*

I have noticed that the partly parasitic plant mistletoe (*Viscum album*) seems to be on the increase around our area of Lillington in Leamington over the last few years, it being evident in the winter months when the trees are lacking leaves. Several years ago, I understand it wasn't so common in Warwickshire. The white translucent berries produced in winter are liked by birds and especially favoured by blackcaps. They eat the flesh and wipe their bills on twigs and branches leaving the seed behind. If this is done on a host tree and takes a hold a new mistletoe plant forms. Because blackcaps increasingly overwinter in Britain this is thought to be partly behind the continuing spread of mistletoe.



A micro moth, the mistletoe marbled moth (*Celypha woodiana*) needs mistletoe to complete its life cycle. The larvae spend the winter inside the leaves, emerge and pupate in spring by forming a cocoon under the bark of the host tree. It's thought that the over-harvesting of mistletoe in some counties where the moth is found is contributing to its decline. It has been found in Warwickshire so hopefully the increase in mistletoe in the county may help in its conservation.

14th February      LD



*Spring is on its way!  
Primroses in All Saints Church,  
Chadshunt*



*Compton Verney – Lakes  
formed by damming a  
tributary of the River Dene*

DR





*A cold, wet day seemed a good time to clean the Mason Bee cocoons. First photo on the left of collage, a good couple of heaped teaspoons of our sandy soil collected to make the nests. The tiny blackish material around the edges is larvae frass.*

*Next the cocoons in the sieve ready for a gentle wash in tepid water to remove any mites. The cocoons are strongly constructed so none is harmed by this step.*

*Finally, the approximately 26 females and 32 males nestled in vermiculite resting in the fridge till Spring and, hopefully, not to be confused with a new topping for ice-cream.*

15th February SG

Red kite seen on outward journey along the Fosse Way near Combrook and then again in the same place as we headed home a few hours later. At the first sighting it joined a group of circling buzzards.

Female blackcap present in the garden this week on at least three occasions.

Honey and bumble bees visiting the garden crocuses on sunny days.

14th February LD



*Warwick's Hillclose Gardens has a very varied collection of named Snowdrops that attract visitors celebrating the arrival of snowdrops as a signal Spring is on the way. I enjoy searching for ones with green markings on top sepals like Galanthus Trurops. The yellow ovaries atop Primrose Warberg stand out too among the bouncy whites and greens.*

*Expert Galanthophiles are known to use a dentists' mirror on a long pole to see the delicate patterns on inner sepals that most of us just glimpse from above.*

*Iris, primulas and other merging spring flowers add to the enjoyment of a walk around this rare survival of Victorian communal pleasure gardens.*

15th February SG

Seen a week or so ago about 10.00 in the morning – a Merlin (female?) opposite Guys Cliffe House chasing Meadow pipits. 17th February RT

*Members might be interested to know that three nature reserve trips are being arranged this year by Johnsons Coaches, as day excursions with Ashley Grove as guide. Ashley was the guide on a recent Scottish birdwatching holiday noted in Snippets. There are local pickup points.*

*The trips include: RSPB Rye Meads, Herts 10 May; Rutland Water 6 June; RSPB Frampton Marsh, Lincs, 3 August.*

*Details are in the latest brochure 'Day Excursions Summer 2022' on page 34, tel 01564 797000 and online at [www.johnsonskoaches.co.uk](http://www.johnsonskoaches.co.uk).*

17th February FW

## St Mary's Lands, Warwick – Skylark monitoring

Warwick District Council will soon be erecting protective fences on parts of St. Mary's Lands around the meadow area to encourage Skylarks and Meadow Pipits to nest. They will be monitoring progress through the breeding season - and again next year - so that any impact can be assessed properly.

We have been asked by the WDC Working Group if members of WNHS who visit this area of the racecourse could make a note of how many skylarks and meadow pipits are seen with dates and times, and whether or not they are singing/displaying.

*If I can just make that hole a little larger .....*



In a brief lull after three storms, when the sun peeped out and wind dropped, I walked in Wolston Wood and followed the circular muddy paths. The snowdrops took my breath away, a vast white wonderland where some flowers glistened in patches of sun on the brown undergrowth. Such a wonderful display by Mother Nature, one of the first signs of spring.

They should be there another week or two for those experts who can identify the varieties growing in that beautiful ancient woodland, once part of the old manor estate. The wood lies just behind Wolston Leisure Centre carpark on Manor Estate Road. It can also be reached from Wolston Village Hall carpark, walking near the war memorial up the lane towards the church and taking a narrow footpath on the left by an ancient wall bordering St Margaret's School. 22nd February FW



Oooh - controversial!!