

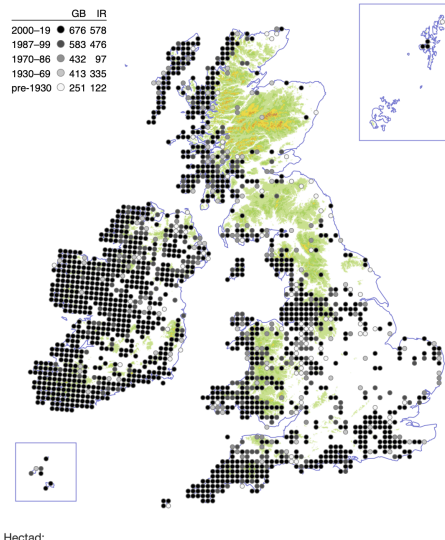


Garden Bird Watch 26th November to 2nd December 2023

The banner photograph this month is the stream on Silver Street with the dying fronds of Royal Fern *Osmunda regalis*. In years gone by, when I and my friends were in the Wild Flower Society (Thewildflowersociety.org.uk) this was a plant we used to go to Askham Bog on the outskirts of York (adjacent to the A64) or onto Hoveton Great Broad in Norfolk. It is, however quite common in the west of the Country. I have seen it in quite a few places in Dorset including amongst willow on the cliffs east of Lyme Regis.

A large fern of neutral or acidic substrates in wet heathland, blanket bog, fen-carr woodland and ditches, and occasionally on riverbanks, rocky lake shores, limestone sea cliffs, mires and sand dune-slacks. In western Ireland it also grows in wet fields. It is often confined to inaccessible sites in grazed areas. Generally lowland but reaching 365 m in South Kerry, and 525 m at Featherbed Moss (Derbyshire).

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Hectad:

The month has been characterised by storms, rain, sun and plenty of colour, especially amongst garden *Acers*. There is a huge amount of soggy leaf litter making walking interesting on some slopes. On days when we have had warm sunshine, an occasional red admiral has emerged to show its splendid colour. Many animals are seeking shelter with Jon W finding a common toad hidden under a pile of leaves, waiting to be flattened by a vehicle. The toad and leaves were transferred to a place of safety. Tidying his garage, he found a common lizard, sheltering, a change from last year's greenhouse but never-the-less welcome.

One of the best things, we have witnessed in my neck of the village is that Penny next door during the summer, grew at least a dozen 2-3m high sunflowers with dinner plate sized flower-heads. They left the seed heads during the autumn and she said, I am certain greenfinch are feeding off them. According to Jon C they were. I visited him, one afternoon and he was jumping up and down with his binoculars commenting that it was years since he had seen a greenfinch at home. So, in 2024, the challenge is to grow tall sunflowers and see if we can be a champion greenfinch village.

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Greenfinch also visit Colehill along with Blue tit, where my daughter lives but keep feeds clean as they spread the nasty virus. The photographs are from Catherine.

Once again 13 of us reported a total of 32 species. Not include in the list is a large flock of starlings on Puddledock Lane, earlier in the week at dusk. No thrushes. We are not seeing redwing or fieldfare coming through here yet. Interesting that we seem to have a small flock of pied wagtail and three reports of grey wagtail (Red data listed). Herring gull numbers seem to be picking up. We are not hearing reports of much Avian flu.

Wild flowers seem to have disappeared and with them no more pollinators, but insects abound if you start turning up leaf mould. The main problem is identifying them.