



### Garden Bird Watch 25<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> May 2015

If away please do the week before or week after

The banner photograph shows the “big bud” gall *Phytoptus avellanae* on hazel. It is unusual to see so many together with no leaves on the stem. Photograph John Newbould

#### Members field notes:

Simon on Preston Road on 2<sup>nd</sup> May saw his first Swifts of the year and a Red Kite circling overhead, both definitely above the garden, but at some height. Indeed, he was alerted to the Kite by a Jackdaw that took off from the garden making an alarm call and heading directly for it. The following day Steven on old Bincombe also saw a red kite. He did see one again the next day (not from the garden this time, but from just up Preston Road when walking the dog). It appeared to be circling over the hill above Winslow Road. Pleased to see that the Slow Worms are still going strong in our compost heap, despite appearing to share it with some rodents over the winter.

Penny from Brookmead reported hearing the Tawny Owl on several occasions. The heron was back two days ago, this time on a Brookmead Close roof (2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025). Penny reported on 4/5/25 that there have been some interesting butterflies in their garden in the last few days including Painted Lady, Wall Brown, Orange Tip and Dingy skipper. Simon again had Speckled Wood and Peacock in the garden, also a “very small blue one”,

Carole from Old Granary reported having had a Sparrow hawk in the garden recently and last week it took a pigeon and a Blackbird, sad but I suppose everything has to eat. We have also found a couple of dead partially eaten Slow Worms on the grass always appearing in the afternoon and haven’t been able to work out what has killed them, not sure if you have any ideas? We don’t get any cats in the garden during the day so it’s a mystery. She commented the Osprey Webcam at Poole (Birds of Poole Harbour) is lovely to watch and we will wait to see how many chicks hatch this year, will it be four again!

Ros reported house martins Arrived back en-masse in afternoon of Monday 28<sup>th</sup> April. They began nest building on former site Friday 2 May

#### Garden Bird Watch

We received records from most of our active members resulting in 264 observations averaging 12 per garden and a total of 38 species. Everybody recorded blackbird, which BTO is highlighting calling for observations from gardens. See [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org) . As far as I can tell one is not nesting in my garden but at quiet times of the day one is hopping across the lawn looking for grubs. Again blue tit and great tit are doing well but I keep commenting house sparrow seems to be in trouble. I

walk most days quite a distance, early in the morning around Sutton Poyntz and Preston and they are certainly disappearing from their old haunts. Chiffchaff may be under-recorded as I do hear it in scrubby areas. It was good to see a record of cuckoo, which a friend tells me seem to be doing well on Dartmoor. Three records of swifts, four of swallows and six of house martin. I must look upwards more being a botanist, I tend to be looking for plants.

### Butterflies:



The team has managed the West Hill Butterfly Conservation Transect walk for six consecutive weeks thanks to the sunny weather but with cold NE winds. Butterflies tend to find sheltered places but Colin managed 14 Adonis blues on the 10<sup>th</sup>. No small tortoiseshell but plenty of speckled wood and orange tip. Endangered wall butterfly recorded on three weeks with a maximum of five individuals. There have only been a few holly blue in my garden this year. I have not tried moth trapping with the cold winds.

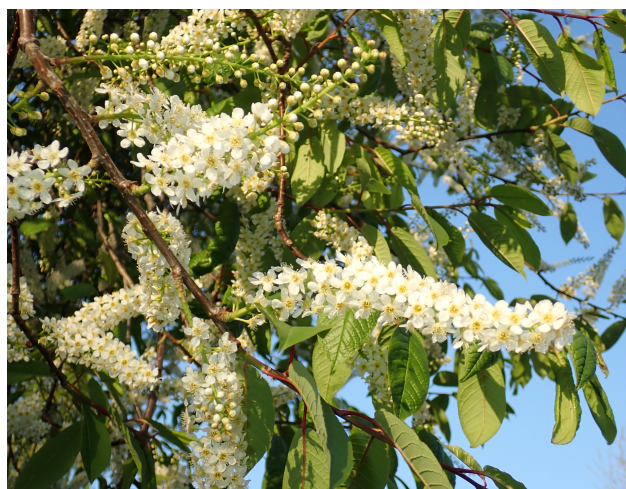
### Our Blossom Season – John Newbould,

I was born during the Second World War. We lived in a 1930s built house with quite a long front garden, which had mainly long beds surrounded by a strip of lawn. These were used for growing vegetables. After the war ended, my father turned to growing hybrid tea roses and by the time, we left the house over 20 years later he had planted over 100 and was an enthusiastic member of the now defunct National Rose Society. I suppose some of this passion rubbed off as I became interested in gardening and many aspects of surveying for wildlife.

The spring of 2025 has been a fabulous year for blossom both in the wider countryside and planted in the many gardens, where I now live on the east side of Weymouth. Blossom is a key National Trust “selling point” when promoting visits to our wider countryside and houses with gardens. We started with cherry plum *Prunus cerasifera* in early March. Later in the month, blackthorn and greengage followed by the first hawthorn on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. We must not forget our trees with ash being an early flowerer followed by pedunculate oak. Pear blossom has been and gone being replaced now by apple. In places, some are clearly crab apple *Malus sylvestris* but others are clearly more related to a cultivated apple *Malus sylvestris* subsp. *domestica*.



Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*



Bird Cherry *Prunus padus*

There are two species of hawthorn. This one has one style and, in the autumn, one seed. The leaves have five to seven lobes. The second one, midland hawthorn *C. laevigata* has two – three

stiles and seeds with only two to three lobes and more glossy leathery leaves. Worst of all, they hybridise. I have never seen this one in Dorset and it was rare when I lived in Rotherham. Bird cherry is planted as an amenity tree around Weymouth. It is a native in the north of England and Scotland. Roughly north of the Yorkshire Dales. The good thing about the Weymouth trees is so far, I have not seen any attacked by the bird cherry ermine moth *Yponomeuta padella*. This insect will completely denude a tree.

There is more blossom to come. *Sorbus* species such as whitebeams (a speciality of the Avon Gorge), limes especially the calcareous woodlands of Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire and not forgetting sweet chestnut at Turnworth.