

Robin Biddle's Nature Notes

Trimley St Martin 'Wildlife'

"It's not necessary to identify everything you see, but enjoy what you do see."

It isn't difficult to compile a 'list' of village wildlife, but it may leave people disappointed as quite rightly, walkers tend to chatter but this sends the birds and beasts into cover.

The Suffolk County list of birds is around four hundred species and in the right season you might see any of them in or around the village. This is also true of about thirty species of furry things.

The birds most likely to be seen are the larger varieties: Pigeons, Rooks and Crows; various Gulls. Increasingly, soaring Buzzards, whose 'Kee-yaa' call is a distinctive sound are often heard. In autumn, Tawny Owls may be heard during the day. The 'Kee-vick' call is the male and female Tawny Owls communicating prior to pairing for the year. Kingfishers, may be seen anywhere along the bay, mainly between November and January. It would insult people's intelligence to cite Swans (the large numbers are non-breeding birds) and Geese.

Of the furry creatures, we have two regular Deer. Fallow and the smaller Muntjac, although Red and Chinese Water Deer have been seen.

Less common in the Orwell, Grey and Common Seals. Rarer still are Harbour Porpoise. You may see a small floppy black fin, appearing above the water, for no more than 10 seconds.

It's possible to see Foxes, Badgers, Brown Hares and Rabbits. Grey Squirrels are scattered around the area and given some luck, Stoats and Weasels may also be seen. Unfortunately, the smaller mammals, Voles and Shrews are more usually seen as corpses.

Butterflies occur in suitable habitats such along Hams Way, The Rookery, Loompit Lake and the Cliffs.

Dragon flies and day flying Moths can often take you by surprise almost anywhere.

Sadly, the woodlands in the village are not accessible, so who knows what treasures of wild flowers we are missing.

PLANTS

Wild Flowers

Stinking Goosefoot, smells worse than a stack of fish boxes. That's one plant that you won't find, on the walks. The closest is Jack by the Hedge (Garlic Mustard) that grows under Stratton Cliff. The size of 'wild flowers' can range from the great candle-like flowers of the Horse Chestnut, to the tiny Geranium Mollis, both of which may be found on the Kirton Road picnic site. Depending on the time of year the first flowers you will probably see are Dandelions and Daisies on the road verges.

Apart from the salt-marsh plants, it is not really possible to give locations for many others for they occur in mostly small groups/areas. A few, Sheep's/Cow Parsley, Nettles, Bramble, Thistle species are seen along the farm tracks, bridleways and lanes. Hemlock, similar in appearance to Sheep's Parsley, is taller, has round stems with brownish blotches and is very poisonous.

Occasionally whole fields will have a display of Poppies, but this is unpredictable. It was quite easy to compile a random list of almost 60 common local plants, but a different matter to describe when and where to see them.

Trees in the Trimley Area

Wherever you stand within the bounds of these walks, look in any direction and there are trees and shrubs. They can be found in gardens, along road sides and as field boundaries. The terms that describe their planting arrangements include: woods; copses; stands; breaks; belts; plantations and hedges. The latter are really trees that have been manipulated, left to grow and may be ten to twenty feet tall. There are no local forests.

To list all the species would fill a book. Most people know of Oaks, the Sweet and Horse Chestnuts, 'Pine' trees, the various fruit varieties such as, Apples, Pears, Cherries etc. Also well-known are the multitude of ornamental trees and shrubs planted in amenity spaces and gardens.

It is unlikely that any one knows just how many tree species are in the area. Sycamores are probably the most numerous. Of the large local trees, worthy of note are the Elms which suffered from Dutch Elm disease. Many were felled in the 1970s. There are still some Elms growing but they tend to be short lived. Hopefully some will survive to grow to sixty or eighty, as the old ones did. The elm trees grew to sixty to eighty eight feet tall.

Prior to building the A14, there were about fifteen woods of varying sizes, mostly between the railway and the river Orwell. Then there are the trees that grew in fields and hedges, with some scattered Oaks dating back three or four hundred years old. There is no public access to any of the woods, so it's not possible to accurately date their age but they may be one to two hundred years. The single Holm Oak that stands opposite Gun Lane on the High Street, is on the site of the old toll gate.

Since the mid 1970s, thousands of trees have been planted as screens. Some of the Oaks in Grimston Lane, mark old field boundaries or traffic noise due to the expanding port. The first were planted along the A14 and Kirton road. Later plantings were closer to Trimley station and the Port Rail marshalling yard as well as Fagbury Cliff to what is now Trimley Terminal.

In the 1980s, trees were planted as 'avenues' between Searsons Farm in Trimley St Mary almost to Morston Hall in Trimley St. Martin. Until 1987, 'The Rookery' running alongside Falkenham Brook was a plantation of Poplar trees, grown for the Bryant and May match company. 'The Rookery' was replanted about 1995, having been 'clear felled' after the 1987 and 1991 gales that destroyed many of the original Poplars.

More recently in the 1990s, two new woods have been planted, one near Kirton Road, and one beside Ham's Way. Sometime around 2014/15, a new block of woodland was planted at Capel Hall, and at about the same time a new Hawthorn hedge was planted along Hams way. In late 2020, further planting started as a new screen alongside the Bridleway Bridge. In December 2020 dense hedging was planted both sides of the bridleway that runs from Grimston Hall Drive to Keepers Lane. Also the boundary hedge from Gun Lane to Cavendish Grove was removed, to be replanted in early 2021.

Crops

Surprisingly, if the Bronze and Iron Age (2-4000 years ago) farmers that lived in the villages, were to return, they would still recognize the farming methods and crops of today. Their cultivation methods were similar, and they grew wheat, barley beans and peas, just as today.

The difference they would notice is that crops are 'tailored' by hybridization and (**not** genetically modified), to suit specific needs. For example, Wheat is no longer just wheat. Different types of bread need different types of flour from different varieties of wheat.

The field sizes are much larger and modern computer-controlled machinery is generally the order of the day.

Most of the local crops are organically grown. The sweet aroma occasionally drifting through the area is from composted 'green bin' waste, which is used as a soil improver (similar to manure). The huge spraying machines that are seen in the fields, are more likely spraying liquid fertilizer than pesticides.

A very brief explanation of the crops and their uses.

Many crops are grown for the consumer market i.e. shops, freezing and processing. Including: Peas, Carrots, Onions, Cauliflowers, Parsley, Sweetcorn and Quinoa, a 'super' health food, similar to Fat-hen.

Potatoes: currently over 200 varieties including specific varieties for chips, crisps, roasting, baking and salads.

Oilseed Rape: (the bright yellow flowers we see in the Spring). The seed is crushed to extract the oil, used as a cooking oil, making margarine and other oil-based products, the remaining pulp is used in animal feeds.

Sugar beet: as the name suggests, is processed to make sugar (much finer grained than cane sugar). By-products include sugar-beet pulp used to make pelleted animal foods and LimeX, an organic soil fertilizer.

Barley: Apart from being used for brewing beers it is also made into flour. One by-product of brewing is malt extract. Some may remember it as the 'malt and cod liver oil' given to children as a food supplement after the Second World War.

Maize: (Corn) Very similar to sweetcorn. The cobs were milled for flour, kibbled or coarse ground and flaked for poultry and animal feed. Green plants may be chopped and fed to livestock although today it is also used as a bio fuel.

Worth bearing in mind, the plants passed on a walk, are more than just 'scenery'. They are the farmer's factory floor.

Robin's Bird sightings (This bird list was acquired over 40 years)

(Please note, the term 'Common' is very misleading)

Arctic Tern	Dunlin	Great Crested Grebe	Sandwich Tern
Bar Tailed Godwit	Eider Duck	Great Grey Shrike	Sedge Warbler
Bareheaded Goose	Eurasian Collared Dove	Great Tit	Sky Lark
Barn Owl	Eurasian Curlew	Greater Northern Diver	Snow Bunting
Barn Swallow	Egyptian Goose	Great Spotted Woodpecker	Snow Goose
Barnacle Goose	Eurasian Hobby	Greater Canada Goose	Song Thrush
Bean Goose	Eurasian Jackdaw	Greater Scaup	Speckled Teal
Bearded Tit	Eurasian Jay	Greater White-fronted Goose	Spotted Flycatcher
Black Brant	Eurasian Marsh-Harrier	Green Sandpiper	Spotted Redshank
Black-billed Magpie	Eurasian Tree crawler	Green Woodpecker	Stock Pigeon
Black Cap	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	Mallard	Stonechat
Black headed Gull	Eurasian Turtle Dove	Mandarin Duck	Tawny Owl
Black Necked Grebe	Eurasian Wigeon	Meadow Pippit	Temmick's Stint
Black Swan	Eurasian Woodcock	Mediterranean Gull	Tufted Duck
Black Tailed Godwit	European Golden Plover	Merlin	Tundra Bean Goose
Black Tern	European Greenfinch	Mew Gull	Tundra Swan
Black-winged Stilt	European Robin	Mistle Thrush	Water Rail
Blue Tit	European Shag	Muscovy Duck	Whimbrel
Bohemian Waxwing	Ferruginous Duck	Mute Swan	White Wagtail
Brambling	Fieldfare	Northern Fulmar	Whooper swan
Brent Goose	Fulvous Whistling Duck	Northern Lapwing	Willow Warbler
Budgerigar	Gadwall	Northern Pintail	Winter Wren
Canary	Gannet	Northern Shoveller	Wood Duck
Carrion Crow	Garden Warbler	Northern Wheatear	Wood Nuthatch
Cetti's Warbler	Goldcrest	Ornamental Crested Duck	Wood Sandpiper
Chaffinch	Goldeneye	Osprey	Yellowhammer
Chiffchaff	Goldfinch	Peregrine Falcon	Yellow Wagtail
Chinese Goose	Goosander	Pied Avocet	
Chloe Wigeon	Great Black backed Gull	Pied Wagtail	

Cockatiel	Great Cormorant	Pink Footed Goose
Common Blackbird	Grey Heron	Polish Mute Swan
Common Bullfinch	Grey Partridge	Razorbill
Common Buzzard	Grey Phalarope	Red Crested Pochard
Common Coot	Grey Plover	Red Legged Partridge
Common Cuckoo	Grey Wagtail	Red-breasted Goose
Common Greenshank	Greylag Goose	Red-Breasted Merganser
Common Guillemot	Hedge Accentor	RedKnot
Common Kestrel	Hen Harrier	Red Necked Grebe
Common Kingfisher	Herring Gull	Red-necked Phalarope
Common Linnet	Honey Buzzard	Red Throated Diver
Common Moorhen	House Martin	Redwing
Common Nightingale	House Sparrow	Reed Bunting
Common Pheasant	Jack Snipe	Reed Warbler
Common Pochard	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Ring Necked Parakeet
Common Redpoll	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	Ring Ouzel
Common Redshank	Lesser White fronted Goose	Ringed Plover
Common Sandpiper	Lesser Whitethroat	Rock Pippit
Common Scoter	Little Auk	Rook
Common Shelduck	Little Egret	Rose-Ringed Parakeet
Common Snipe	Little Grebe	Ross's Goose
Common Starling	Little Gull	Ruddy Duck
Common Swift	Little Owl	Ruddy Sheldrake
Common Teal	Little Stint	Ruddy Turnstone
Common Tern	Little Tern	Ruff
Common Whitethroat	Long Tailed Duck	Saker
Common Wood Pigeon	Long Tailed Skua	Sand Martin
Corn Bunting	Long Tailed Tit	Sanderling

Robin's Mammal sightings

American Mink	Grey Seal	Rabbit
Badger	Grey Squirrel	Red Deer
Brown Hare	Harbour Porpoise	Red Fox
Brown Long-eared bat	Hedgehog	Reeves Muntjac
Brown Rat	House Mouse	Stoat
Common Seal	Mole	Water Vole
Common Shrew	Noctule Bat	Water Shrew
Coypu	Otter	Weasel
Daubenton's Bat	Pipistrelle Bat	Wood Mouse
Fallow Deer	Polecat/Feral Hybrid	Yellow necked Mouse
Field Vole	Pygmy Shrew	

Robin's flower observations

Aconites	Hemlock (Poisonous to touch)	Scabious
Agrimony	Herb Bennet	Scarlet Pimpernel
Bedstraws	Herb Robert	St John's Wort
Bluebell	Hogweed	Sea Aster
Bindweeds	Horned Poppies	Sea Purslane
Brambles	Ivy	Sheep Parsley
Buttercups	Knapweed	Snowdrop
Canadian Fleabane	Mallow	Sorrel
Celandines	Mayweeds	Speedwell
Chicory	Mugwort	Spurges
Clovers	Mustard garlic	Sweet wild carrot
Common Buglos	Nettle	Teazle
Cowslip	Nightshades	Thistles
Cranesbills	Orache	Thrift
Daisy	Oxeye Daisy	Toadflax
Dandelion	Pineapple weed	White Champion
Dittander	Plantains	Woundwort
Dog Rose	Poppy	Yarrow
Fat-hen	Primrose	Yellow Corn Marigold
Garlic Mustard	Ragwort	Yellow horned poppy
Greater Stitchwort	Red / Champion	
Groundsel	Reedmace	