

## January 2011

### Weather Wisdom

*“In January if the sun appear  
March and April will pay full dear.”*

I am pleased to report that this month the weather has reverted to a more normal Atlantic type. The snow has disappeared and we have experienced milder, wet January days. I hope the very cold weather does not return. With the days slowly lengthening I'm looking forward to Spring.

### Nature Notes

Not a lot to report this month.

Members reported seeing the following species in the village: -

Red Wings  
Barn Owl  
Pied Wagtail  
Woodpecker  
Long-Tailed Tits  
A Fox

Not really Willoughby news but a flock of Waxwings were photographed in Coventry.

## **February 2011**

### Weather Wisdom

*“February always brings the rain and thaws the frozen lakes again”*

February was generally a mild month but also a gloomy one. Southwesterly winds reached gale force on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of the month and blew power lines in Richard Heckford’s field down. Parts of Willoughby were without electricity for the best part of a day. That evening we had a splendid floodlit view from our upstairs bedroom window, of the poor man from E-ON at the top of the electricity pole, trying to attach the wires in such terrible weather conditions.

He certainly earned his money that night.

I am glad to say that there have been no signs of the very cold weather returning.

### **Nature Sitings**

Mrs Betty Oates saw a Blackcap (see photo) in her garden this month. This warbler is occasionally seen in the UK and is found in thick undergrowth. They do visit gardens when times are hard and feed on berries and at bird-tables.

Four Red legged partridge were seen in Richard Heckford’s field.

Other sitings include: -

Village ducks are getting that spring feeling and invading village gardens looking for nesting sites.

Long Tailed Tits

Sparrow Hawk

Yellow Hammer

Bramling

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Fieldfares in Flecknoe

Lapwings



## March 2011

Weather wisdom

*“A dry March and a rainy April makes a beautiful May”*

It has been the driest March since 1953 according to the Daily Telegraph. Reservoirs are very low and companies are already pumping supplies from rivers. We have already been told that hosepipe bans will be necessary this summer.

High pressure dominated our weather this month keeping Atlantic systems at bay. The first half of the month was rather cold and cloudy. The second half however was more settled with warm days and cold nights.

### Nature Notes

Spring has arrived. The birds are singing. The days are getting longer. Our garden Robin is very territorial.

We have had some beautiful sunny days.

March 15<sup>th</sup> was the warmest day so far this year. On that day we heard and saw the Skylark singing high in the sky.

March 14 we saw a Brimstone butterfly also 2 Tortoiseshell butterflies.

We have also noticed a lot of bees in the garden especially around our Goat Willow tree, which is full of blossom.

Ladybirds are everywhere.

A Chiffchaff has been spotted and also a dead Yellow Hammer. (I hope it wasn't the one I wrote about in last month's Nature Notes!)

This month's top bird watcher must be Mr Bob O'Donnell who saw a Waxwing (see photo) in his garden. The local paper reported sightings of this rather rare visitor from Scandinavia, in Warwickshire. They usually fly in flocks and are often mistaken for Starlings. They are rather upright birds, short-legged birds with a distinctive crest on their heads.

The spring flowers in village gardens are magnificent. The tree blossom is also looking good.



## April 2011

### Weather Wisdom

*'April and May are the keys to the whole year'*

April 2011 was the UK's warmest April on record with, on average, half the usual rainfall. UK wide records began in 1910, but the 'Central England Temperature Record' goes back to 1659, making this month the warmest April here for over 350 years!

Following a drier than average winter, this dry April follows a dry March.

Lower than average rainfall is now causing much concern to farmers, gardeners and Water Companies.

The reason for the warm spring sunshine has been the persistence of high-pressure systems dominating the weather pattern. High-pressure prevents the more typical westerly winds coming in from the Atlantic Ocean bringing rain bearing weather fronts.

I have never seen the countryside look so wonderful as it has done this month. The blossom on trees and in hedgerows takes your breath away. The spring flowers are a delight. Everything is coming into bloom much earlier than usual and there have been no damaging winds to spoil the display.

### Nature Notes

- Mrs Clare Hewitt reported seeing a Red Kite flying in Willoughby.
- An angry Moor Hen was seen attacking a Grass Snake who was swimming in the Village Pond.
- Mr Jackson saw a Stoat crossing his garden patio.
- The Cuckoo has been heard in Willoughby.
- The Swallows have arrived.
- Canada Geese have been seen in the village.
- Mr Maurice Henson has two wrens nesting in his garden.
- Ducklings are on the village pond



May 2011

## WEATHER WISDOM

‘Who doffs his coat on a winters day will gladly put it on in May.’

Newspapers have been reporting that ‘The UK is enjoying the hottest driest spring since records began.’

This was certainly true for the first three weeks of May.

The last week of the month however saw a change in the weather when cloudy, very windy weather prevailed.

The Spring Bank Holiday brought the first real rain for sometime and The Bank Holiday was, as usual, a wash-out.

## NATURE NOTES

The new Information Board is now in place at the Village Pond. This has been partly funded by the Willoughby Society.

- Mr & Mrs Jackson report seeing Pipistrelle Bats at Hazeldene.
- Tawny Owls have been heard.
- Plenty of Swallows about.
- Mrs Andrea Hughes has had a family of Hedgehogs in her garden.
- A pair of Wagtails made their nest in a hanging basket.
- There are plenty of Greenfinches and Goldfinches about this year despite reports that their numbers seemed to be falling after the severe winter
- A Brown Hare came into our garden and sat for a few minutes outside our lounge window.

On the 4 May, members of the Willoughby Society Committee went on a ‘Village Walk Around’ with Mr Mike Slater from the Wild Life Trust. He came to give us advice on where in the village we could successfully plant wild flowers. Areas of particular interest being the village pond and the Marlow Memorial Garden.

## **June 2011**

No meeting of the Willoughby Society this month as members attended the Annual dinner at Draycote Hotel.

### **Weather report**

The month began fine and warm but the weather became more unsettled. The

Midlands did stay relatively dry. The last week of the month did give us a short lived warm spell and we experienced the highest temperatures of the year so far.

### **Nature Notes**

Following the Village Walk Around ( See May Nature Notes) wildlife improvement planting will take place on 9 July 2011. Warwickshire Wildlife Trust will send one of their members on the day with the tools required and the wild flower plugs. The event will be publicized in the Willoughby Monthly and we hope a good number of Society members and villagers will help with the planting.

## **July 2011**

No Willoughby Society Meeting this month as members took part in the annual “Car Rally”.

### **Weather**

The month started with fine weather but it quickly became rather unsettled and cool for the time of year.

Paper reported it had been “The coldest July across the UK since 1980”

However the last week of the month saw a change to higher temperatures and drier weather.

### **Nature Notes**

The Wildlife Improvement planting took place on 9 July. A good number of villagers came along to help and the job was soon done.

We hope the ‘plants will survive as we have had very little rain this year and the soil is very dry.

## **August 2011**

No meeting in August. It is holiday time

### **Weather**

Once again I'm afraid the weather was unsettled, cool and cloudy. Not quite what we wanted. Overall it was rather a dull month. Cloud cover kept temperatures down. We really need rain but had very little. The Midland area has been drier than average. We have had less than 50% of normal rainfall this year.

### **Nature Notes**

The Wildlife Improvement Planting Scheme (See May Nature Notes) is part of a project organised by The Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Another part of the scheme is an award for people or communities who have wildlife friendly features in their gardens.

It is called "Gardens Go Wild." We are hoping to enter this part of the scheme as well. The prize is £300 in vouchers to be spent at the Wildlife Trust Shop.

## **September 2011**

### **Weather Wisdom**

*“If acorns abound in September, snow will be deep in December.”*

### **Weather**

September has seen changeable weather again with strong winds at times. The last week of the month however saw the weather change for the better.

It seems our long awaited Indian Summer has arrived.

We have had a very fine warm spell with some exceptionally high temperatures for the time of year.

After a rather dismal summer we are all enjoying this heat wave.

### **Nature Notes**

- A Sparrowhawk has been feeding on Willoughby sparrows
- Green Woodpecker has been seen in a Willoughby garden.
- A hare has been spotted in the Village Hall garden.
- A Peacock has been seen at Woolscott
- Yellowhammer seen in a hedge at Grandborough.
- There will be an autumn clearing project at Haywoods Lodge in the near future. The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers will be working there removing non-native trees and brambles.

## **October 2011**

### **Weather Wisdom**

‘If squirrels early mass their hoard, expect a winter like a sword’

October began with a heat wave and we experienced some exceptionally high temperatures. Summer had come again. The newspapers are saying that this autumn could be the warmest on record. The weather since the beginning of September has been unseasonably warm. Southerly winds have been bringing in these warmer temperatures.

Here in the Midlands we are still experiencing a shortage of rain. Everywhere is very dry and the gardens do not look their best. This is not so in other parts of the country.

### **Nature Notes**

Good News. Willoughby won the Gardens Go Wild Award 2011. This was because of the wild flower planting work at the village pond and also because of the individual garden entries, particularly Phoebe and Adam Hewitt’s garden. The award certificate, collected by Phoebe, is to be hung on the Village Hall wall. Phoebe and Adam have been given two splendid nest boxes to hang in their garden.

The following wildlife have been seen or heard in villagers’ gardens :-

- Tawny Owls (very vocal)
- Great Tits
- Long- tailed Tits
- Sparrowhawk
- Two foxes passing through a village garden.

## **November 2011**

### **Weather Wisdom**

*'If the November goose wishbone be thick, so will the winter weather be. If thin, likewise the winter weather be.'*

### **Weather Report**

Southerly winds have dominated our weather this month and as a result this November has been the warmest for 17 years. After two very cold winters this mild and uneventful winter month is quite a surprise.

### **Nature Notes**

- Long-tailed Tits have been visiting bird feeders in village gardens, as has the Great Spotted Woodpecker.
- Buzzards have been spotted again. They are becoming quite a common site in Willoughby these days.
- Mr Ken Miles from the Red House has observed a female Sparrowhawk taking a keen interest in local pigeons and sparrows.
- Poppies are flowering in a Willoughby garden
- A Polecat has been seen running along Lower Street.
- The mild weather has produced a picking of Early Sprouting Broccoli in our vegetable garden. This is a crop that we usually pick and eat in April. This year it really is living up to its name.
- Hyacinths and Daffodil bulbs are coming through in Willoughby gardens.
- The Oak Tree in Woolscott Road has not yet shed its leaves.

## **December 2011**

No meeting of the Willoughby Society this month.  
Nature Notes are therefore rather short.

### **Weather Wisdom**

The best piece of advice about this month is given in this 18<sup>th</sup> century saying.

*' In December, keep yourself warm '*

### **Weather Report**

Frosts have been rare this month. The unseasonably warm weather has continued and we have had one of the mildest Christmas Days on record.

We did however experience severe gales on 8<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> December. Wind speeds across parts of the UK were exceptional and caused structural damage in many areas.