

January 2012

Weather Wisdom

“If snow lies for three days it will require another fall of snow to take it away”

The month began with very mild conditions but by 3 January we were experiencing a major winter storm. Severe wind and rain greeted commuters returning to work after the New Year break. The Met Office issued a severe weather warning.

By the middle of the month the weather was milder, but temperatures were low at night. Then the weather became more unsettled with mainly westerly winds bringing in weather fronts.

It became much colder at the end of January

Nature Notes

The warm weather is confusing nature. We have daffodils in bloom in our garden. Other bulbs are coming through. Winter Aconites are in flower. Spring blossom can be seen on some flowering trees. Willow Trees are coming into leaf.

- Ducks and Drakes on the village pond think spring has arrived.
- Tawny Owls can be heard in the village.
- Villagers have seen Redwings and Fieldfares .
- A Mink has been seen at Fleckoe.

This is bad news indeed. The mink is a medium size member of the weasel family. The first wild mink were brought to British fur farms in 1929 and all wild mink in Britain today are descendants of escapees. Commercial fur farming selectively bred a much paler coloured mink hence most of those wild in Britain are a light brown not a glossy dark brown. Mink are major factors in the decimation of the Water Vole population.



February 2012

Weather wisdom

*'February Fillydyke, be it black or be it white,
But if it be white, 'tis better to like'.*

February was a month of two halves. The first two weeks the weather was very cold. Newspaper headlines on 4 February stated : -

' Gritters put on stand by as winter tightens its icy grip'.

We feared the worst.

On the 11 February the outside temperature at The Leys, Woolscott Road was -8 C. The weather forecasters warned us of snow and freezing rain. The cold weather was due to a very dominant ridge of high pressure extending from a Russian anticyclone.

However, the last two weeks of February 2012 were very mild for the time of year. The winds switched direction. Spring is on its way.

It is not all good news. The drought warning has returned again. Rivers and reservoirs are very low. The general shortage of rain has now lasted since December 2009.

Nature Notes

Daffodils, Snowdrops Winter Aconites are all looking good and stealing a march on spring.

Keith Skinner and Richard Jackson have put two new bird boxes up in Hayward's Lodge. The new boxes were bought with vouchers won in September 2011, when the village entered the 'Gardens Go Wild Project' organised by Brandon Marsh Nature Centre.

The following species have been spotted in Willoughby this month :-

Goldfinches

Green Woodpecker

Great Spotted Woodpecker

Robin (very friendly)

Parakeet

Lapwing

Greenfinches

Sparrowhawk

Frogs

Ducks

March 2012

Weather

*The flowers that bloom in the spring/tra la
Breathe promise of merry sunshine/tra la
As we merrily dance and we sing/tra la
We welcome the hope that they bring/tra la
Of a summer of roses and wine*

W.S. Gilbert. The Mikado

This has been the warmest March since 1997.

The sunniest March since 1929

Also this March has been one of the driest.

Hosepipe bans will come into force soon. Fines of £1000 will be imposed if you are caught using one.

High pressure has again dominated the scene and how we have enjoyed it.

A Mad March heat wave indeed. This is all down to an area of high pressure to the east of us bringing in warm air from France and the Mediterranean. We have had glorious blue skies and high temperatures, more like summer weather than early spring. The clocks have now been put forward an hour so the evenings are lighter and longer.

Nature Notes

Long-tailed Tits are nesting in Mr and Mrs Wheeler's garden.

Goldcrest nesting in Mr and Mrs Ogle's garden

The following species have been seen in Willoughby this month: -

Rabbits

Grey Squirrels

Woodpeckers

Robin

Greenfinches

Goldfinches

Chaffinches

Blue Tits

Great Tits Mallard Ducks

Brimstone Butterfly

Peacock Butterfly Bumble Bees.

April 2012

Weather

T S Eliot in his poem The Waste Land states

'April is the cruellest month'

and April 2010 was a cruel month weatherwise.

April began on the dry side. Newspapers reported drought measures were being put in place. Reservoirs were operating at low levels and gardeners were getting worried

As we approached the middle of the month the weather changed and became very unsettled. Once the rain started it didn't know when to stop. We also had hail, low temperatures, strong winds, night frosts and even snow in some northern areas.

By the end of the month flood warnings were in place and severe weather was reported in some areas. The drought was well and truly over.

Rugby experienced severe weather on 26 April 2012.

The Daily Telegraph reported, and I quote:-

'Tornado in Rugby rips roof off house'

Apparently dozens of residents were forced to evacuate their homes after a mini tornado tore through a quiet suburb. Vicious winds caused havoc when they struck on Wednesday evening in Rugby Warwickshire.

The Met Office said that the damage was likely to have been caused by a funnel wind and possibly a tornado.

It has been the wettest April in the UK for over 100 years with some areas seeing 3 times their usual average and as we look forward to May the weather forecast gets no better.

Nature Notes

The following species have been spotted in Willoughby this month:-

Pied Wagtail

Red-Legged Partridge

Crows mobbing a Buzzard

A Hare

Moles

Ducks

The Swallows have arrived

May 2012

Weather wisdom

A dry May foretells a wholesome summer.

Weather

The weather continues to disappoint. The first half of May was very cold. Temperatures were well below normal. Once again this is all due to the Jet Stream being displaced too far south. If it would only move back to its more northerly position we should enjoy more normal summer weather.

Experts say however there is no sign of summer weather yet.

May has been the wettest month since records began.

Nature Notes

A pair of Bullfinches in our garden.

Red-Legged Partridge in Woolscott Road.

Kestrel

Mr and Mrs Jackson saw a fox in the field next to the pond.

June 2012 The Queen's Diamond Jubilee

Weather Wisdom

A swarm of bees in June is worth a silver spoon.

Weather

June was one of the wettest, coldest and dullest months on record. We experienced prolonged rainfall, short but exceptionally heavy showers and storms in many areas. There has been serious flooding in many places and there seems to be no end of this atrocious weather.

I can however with confidence say the that drought is over.

This bad weather is very depressing and it looks like we will have to forget flaming June.

Nature Notes

The following birds appear to be nesting in our garden: -

Robin, Dunnock, Blackbird, Chaffinches. Collared Dove, Blue Tit, and Goldfinch,

Also spotted in Willoughby: -

Holly Blue Butterfly

Grass Snake

Frog Spawn

Chiffchaff at Hayward's Lodge

July 2012

No Willoughby Society meeting this month as members took part in the annual 'Car Rally'.

Weather Wisdom

*If the first of July be rainy weather
T'will rain for full four weeks together.*

Weather

Cool, dull and wet. No change there then.

Pressure remained low until 20 July when we had about seven days of hot sunny weather. It did not last and unsettled weather returned at the end of the month.

August 2012

No Willoughby Society meeting this month. It is holiday time.

Weather

It is really the same story. The rain came down, but temperatures were up.

So we walked in the rain and felt rather warm.

A pleasant change from walking in the rain and feeling very cold.

Bank Holiday Monday was of course a washout.

There is a glimmer of hope that September could be a dry month.

Last year some of the hottest days were recorded in October.

Nature Notes

The bad weather has not been good for wildlife.

The cold, wet conditions have left birds, bees, butterflies, moths, bats and wildflowers struggling.

September 2012

September has been a wet month although we have had some warm autumn days and night time temperatures just above freezing.

Wild weather swept across the country between the 23rd and 25th September. It produced torrential rain and severe gales with flooding in many areas. This was one of the most intense September storms in 30 years.

Nature Notes

- A Barn Owl has been seen in Willoughby gardens.
- At the beginning of the month numerous butterflies were seen in village gardens. Peacock, Red Admiral, Tortoiseshell and others were a pleasure to see. We missed them during the summer months when the weather was so wet and cold.
- While in her garden Mrs Pettifer saw three Buzzards flying overhead.
- A Badger was also seen.
- Ravens in Dead Man's Lane.
- Mr O'Donnell reported seeing a Green Woodpecker.
- Mrs Jackson has plenty of Goldfinches in her garden.
- A Fox is about. Lock up your chickens.
- Red Kites flying over the M40.
- Mr Hodges saw a shooting star over Flecknoe at about 11pm one September night. The newspapers reported that it was meteors or just space junk.
- **Now the bad news.** An outbreak similar to Dutch Elm disease could strike our country's Ash trees. It is a destructive fungus called **Chalara Fraxinea**, which is becoming widespread through out Europe.
- The Swallows have flown away - hence this months saying:-

'The summer goes with the swallows'

October 2012

Weather wisdom

'If in October the leaves still hold, the coming winter will be cold.

Weather

On the whole the month of October 2012 was cold, dull and wet. Quite different from October 2011 which started with a heat wave.

The month began with unsettled wet and windy weather. This pattern continued into the second week and high amounts of rainfall were recorded. Week three:- foggy and dull with no sunshine. Temperatures fell at the end of the month.

On the positive side October 2012 has given us spectacular displays of autumn colour.

Nature Notes

The following species have been seen in our garden: -

- A Jay. This bird is now a regular visitor.
- A Coal Tit feeding on peanuts
- Tawny Owls were heard one night.
- A rather small hedgehog was seen.
- The Ash tree die back fungus *Chalara Fraxinea* has been found at a nursery near Rugby. This is very bad news. There is no known cure for ash die back. Ash is our most common tree and they support over 100 species of insects on which birds feed. In Britain we have about 80 million ash trees. Ash die back is characterised by wilting and brown discolouration of the leaves, and lesions on the bark. Our native woodland is facing a real threat. We should all be concerned.

November 2012

Weather Wisdom

*'Sybil of months and worshipper of winds,
I love thee, rude and boisterous as thou art.'*
John Clare – poet

Weather

November 2012 was one of the wettest on record. Rain was particularly heavy and prolonged between the 20th and 27th.

This triggered flooding in several regions, Willoughby Main Street being one of them. The brook became a rushing stream. So much rain fell on already saturated ground flooding was inevitable. There were similar scenes in Grandborough and the surrounding area.

More downfalls continued as the end of the month drew near bringing chaos across the country.

Nature Notes

No nature notes this month. November was our AGM. The nature notes were forgotten.

December 2012

Weather Wisdom

St Thomas Day is always grey; the longest night, the shortest day. (21st December)

Weather

Good riddance to December 2012 which added to our misery by continuing the winter deluge, pushing rainfall figures into the record books. It was a soggy Christmas with more heavy downfalls making travel difficult and dangerous.

As for the year 2012, we went from drought in April to flood.

A year that will be remembered for hosepipe bans in March and rain there after.

Nature Notes

A daffodil is in flower in my front garden.
The rest of my garden is a quagmire.