

January 2009

Weather Wisdom

(If you are a farmer take heed)

'If grass do grow in January

T'will grow the worse for all the year

Weather

January 2009 was the coldest since 1997 and ironically also the sunniest since 2003.

The weather was very cold for the first ten days with some unusually prolonged frosts. Thereafter the weather became much more unsettled with rain at times and remaining generally cold. The month ended with a ridge of high pressure extending across England. Easterly winds were blowing and they became progressively colder.

Nature Notes

1. A Gold Crests has been seen in the village.
2. Lapwings and Redwings have been seen in the fields again.
3. Gold Finches are regularly coming to our bird table. They love the Niger seed. Long tailed Tits are also a welcome site.
4. Mr & Mrs Walton have seen a Kingfisher in the brook near their cottage.
5. Snowdrops are flowering later than they have done for a while because of the prolonged cold snap. The snowdrops in my garden did not put in an appearance until late January. Other years, when the winters were milder, they were in flower shortly after Christmas.

February 2009

Weather Wisdom

*'Much February snow
April summer will show'*

Weather

February started badly.

The first half of the month was very cold with heavy snowfall beginning on the second of February and continuing all week. Travel was difficult and schools were closed. This was the most widespread snowfall as a whole, since February 1991.

From February 8-16 we had rain, wind, sleet and more snow. Daytime temperatures were very low and there was no thaw of the lying snow. Supplies of grit to keep roads clear, were running very low across the country at this time. Councils were criticised for not maintaining supplies. We were all feeling rather miserable.

It wasn't until the 16 February that temperatures began to rise.

High pressure was established in the second half of the month bringing milder and dryer conditions. Thank goodness. The month ended on a much milder note.

Experts are saying this has been the harshest winter for 20 years.

Nature Notes

1. The village pond is in the process of having a makeover. Trees have been felled where necessary and the remaining ones have been pollarded. The pond had become very overgrown over the years. I had no idea it was so large. The ducks seem to have been a bit upset by the changes made and there are not many on the pond at the moment. I hope they will return when the work is over.
2. It is claimed that the long hard winter will have a positive effect on native plant life. The heavy frosts and low temperatures should kill off many pests and diseases.
3. Reported sighting of a fox in the village. Also Redwings, two Tawny Owls, a Jay, a Gold Crest, a Redshank, a Brambling, a Kestrel and several Canada geese.
4. Mrs Walton is regularly feeding a pair of Field Voles. They have taken a fancy to the Robin food that regularly she puts out in her garden.

Now I'm looking forward to Spring.

March 2009

Weather Wisdom

*'March, month of many weathers, wildly comes
In hail and snow and threatening floods and hums'
(John Clare)*

Weather

March was a pleasant month. An unsettled first half was followed by fine weather. Temperatures were above normal due to warmer than average daytime temperatures especially in the Midlands. Rainfall was about average.

Nature Notes

Mrs Elaine Heckford reported seeing a parakeet in her garden. Other villagers have also reported seeing the bright green bird. It is very noisy with loud squealing, squawking calls. It does not appear to be a bird that has escaped from an aviary. I understand there are groups of these birds living successfully in other parts of the country.

The loud call of the Green Woodpecker has been heard in the village and also the sound of it excavating a nest hole.

Two badgers were seen in the road near Flecknoe Station

An otter had been seen in the canal near Braunston.

A Mistle Thrush was spotted in Betty Oates garden.

There seem to be plenty of bees about.

Brimstone butterflies have also been spotted.



April 2009

Weather Wisdom

'April showers bring May flowers'

April was a pleasant month. High pressure brought long spells of warm sunny weather. We really felt that spring had arrived. Temperatures were above normal and it was a dry month with rainfall below average.

Nature Notes

- The Cuckoo was heard on the 12th April.
- House Martins and Swallows have arrived in the village.
- A duck is sitting on a nest she has made in the Privet hedge by the Village Hall gates. Her head is sticking out of the top of the hedge. A most amusing sight. If the eggs hatch the ducklings will have a long way to jump to reach the brook.
- Another duck has a nest in the flower barrel outside the Rose Inn.
- Buzzards have been seen again in the Village. This time they made the mistake of flying near the Rookery in Main Street. The Rooks took it upon themselves to drive them away. Bert Ogle saw them launch a determined attack and reported that they acted very much like Spitfire pilots during the war. The Buzzards very quickly retreated.
- In a similar way Rooks were observed driving away a large Heron who had upset them.
- A hare is seen regularly early in the morning Flecknoe way.
- The Spring flowers and blossom on the trees and hedges have been magnificent this year. After such a hard winter it does rather lift your spirits. I'm sure we are all hoping for a good summer.



May 2009

Weather Wisdom

*“Ne’er cast a clout till May is out,
Button to chin till June be in,
If you change in June you change too soon,
Change in July? You’ll catch cold bye and bye.
Change in August if you must.
But be sure to remember, change back in September.”*

Summer has got off to a good start. We have had one of the sunniest months in recent years with more sunshine than usual. This has also been a very dry month.

Nature Notes

1. A thrush had a nest in our hedge and successfully raised four babies.
2. Plenty of goldfinches have been spotted.
3. The starlings are nesting in our roof again. They are very noisy.
4. Rabbits are everywhere.
5. Goldfinches in our garden come regularly for Niger seed. They are so colourful.
6. On Sunday May 8th members of the Willoughby Society met at Haywood’s Lodge. A general tidy up took place.

June 2009

Weather Wisdom

*If the cuckoo sings after St John's Day' the harvest will be late.
(St John's Day is Midsummer Day the 24th June)*

After a hot start to June some very wet weather arrived. This was followed by slow moving thundery downpours.

We all crossed our fingers for good weather on 27th and 28th June when the Willoughby Weekend was taking place. Fortunately the weather was fine and warm, if a little overcast. So all was well and the weekend was a great success.

Towards the end of the month Weather Watches for Heat were issued as daytime temperatures were expected to exceed 30C. It was uncomfortably hot and humid for a few days.

Nature Notes

1. A Song Thrush and a Siskin were observed.
2. Plenty of baby birds everywhere.
3. Ducks on our Village Pond don't seem to have done so well this year. Not many baby ducklings about. The re-vamp of the pond earlier this year may have upset them.

July 2009

Weather Wisdom

A saying from Germany this month, which is also true in this country: -

'What is to thrive in September must be baked in July.'

July was a disappointing month. The weather experts promised us a 'barbeque summer, but it's just not happening.

The heat wave that began in late June lasted for the first few days of July with temperatures approaching 30C. The rainfall that followed resulted in July being the wettest on record for England and Wales. There was flooding in many areas.

Nature Notes

Nature Notes are a bit thin on the ground this month. There was no formal meeting of the Society due to the fact that the annual Car Treasure Hunt was taking place.

1. A couple of Red Legged Partridges were spotted in the field opposite our bungalow in Woolscott Road.
2. One story appearing in our newspapers concerns the disappearance of our Honeybees and other pollinators. It is reported that they are dying off in alarming numbers and no one knows why this is really happening. Disease, climate change, pesticides have all been blamed for the decline. Honeybees are vital to producing our food. Beekeepers are worried enough about the situation to mount a lobby of Parliament. I have been checking my vegetable patch and there do seem to be plenty of bees in Willoughby this summer.
3. The rapid spread of Swine Flu is also causing concern, but as there are no pigs in Willoughby (at least I don't think there are) that should not concern us!!!

August 2009

Weather Wisdom

'St Bartholomew's is the day to start collecting honey'

(Colony collapse permitting)

August was a disappointing month. It had some bright days but many remained cloudy for much of the time. It was also quite a dry month. Not the best end to summer. The days are getting shorter and there is an autumnal feeling in the air. However, late August and early September have often yielded high temperatures. I am hoping for an Indian summer.

Nature Notes

No meeting this month. Nature Notes rather limited.

The hare made a brief appearance in our garden.

Mrs Elaine Heckford thinks the green parakeets that are still in her garden, may have made a nest.

Family of pheasant chicks seen walking in Woolscott Road.

Parakeet added to wildlife hit-list

**By Louise Gray
Environment Correspondent**

PARAKEETS are now fair game after being officially deemed a pest.

The wildlife watchdog Natural England gave the birds the designation under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, which allows them to be shot without a licence. From Jan 1 it will also be possible to destroy nests and take eggs if there is proof the bird is causing a nuisance.

The ring-necked parakeet was brought to Britain from India and first reported in the wild in 1969. Latest estimates



A parakeet in London. Their numbers have increased to the point where they have become a nuisance

put numbers above 20,000, with the majority in London and the South East, but some have been seen as far north as Scotland. They are a nuisance for fruit growers, raiding orchards in Surrey, and could threaten native species. Being added to the list does not mean the birds

can be shot as game, which comes under different rules on "legal quarry". However, it does mean that if a landowner or "authorised person" has good reason to believe the birds are causing a problem, they can be shot without a licence.

Helen Phillips, the chief executive of Natural England, said: "Non-native species are a major threat to global biodiversity and it is important that licences can operate as an effective tool in helping to tackle the problem." Graham Madge of the RSPB was confident the new rules would not be abused.

September 2009

Weather Wisdom

'If acorns abound in September, snow will be deep in December.'

In marked contrast to July and August and after an unsettled start, we enjoyed plenty of fine sunny weather this month. Temperatures were generally above normal and rainfall was well below average. It was reported to have been the driest September for 12 years.

After the poor summer this warm spell was very welcome.

Nature Notes

Badgers have visited Mr Bob O'Donnell's garden and he was not pleased with the state they left it in.

A Sparrow hawk was seen sitting on a fence in Woolscott Road. It was rather a large bird, possibly a female.

Grass Snake has been seen basking in the sun.

Ravens have been spotted at Shuckborough.

October 2009

Weather Wisdom

'If in October the leaves do hold the coming winter will be cold'

Another lovely month. Temperatures were generally above average and rainfall below average too. Our gardens are looking lovely. Summer flowers are still with us. October has again given us one of the most spectacular shows of autumn colour.

Last year on October 28th snow was falling in Willoughby! We have truly experienced an Indian Summer this year. The definition of an Indian Summer being unseasonably warm and dry weather in the late autumn. The term Indian Summer reached England in the 19th century during the heyday of the British Raj. This led to the mistaken belief that the term referred to the Indian subcontinent. In fact, the Indians in question were the Native American Indians, and the term began use there in the late 18 century.

Nature Notes

A Tawny Owl has been making a lot of noise in Woolscott Road recently. One was also seen flying in that area.

A Green Woodpecker has been spotted.

Buzzards circling in Barby Lane.

The Village Pond has now been dredged and a new island had been constructed for the ducks and other wildlife. Duck numbers are increasing again.

November 2009

Weather Wisdom

Most of the January weather predictions all add up to the same thing. If there is any good in January, we will pay for it later on! No wonder the Romans named it after Janus, the two faced god.

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

It has been a very wet November. Records for November rainfall were broken in many areas and some parts of the country experienced serious flooding. No floods in Willoughby thank goodness. We experienced some high winds also, however temperatures were well above normal.

Nature Notes

Not much to record this month. (Willoughby Society AGM took place)

We have seen Redwings in our garden on more than one occasion. A sure sign that winter is on its way.

We also saw a flock (not sure if that is the right word) of Lapwings land in the field opposite our bungalow in Woolscott Road. That *was* a real treat, as Lapwing numbers are declining these days.



RED WING

December 2009

Weather Wisdom

21st December *“St Thomas’s Day” a Day of Prediction*

“St Thomas Day is always grey;
The longest night, the shortest day.”

December has been a month of surprises weather-wise. It started well with two weeks of predominately mild weather. However, the third week brought a sharp fall in temperature with frost and snow. Fortunately the weather eased somewhat over the Christmas holiday period in the southern half of the country. Temperatures were still low enough however to make this December Britain’s coldest for 13 years.

Nature Notes

1. Two Mistle Thrushes have been in our garden searching for food during this very cold weather. They have been eating berries and crab apples and hopping around the bird table looking for scraps. The Mistle Thrush is larger than the ordinary Thrush and is a very attractive bird.
2. We have observed Wrens using one of our old nest boxes to roost in at night. At least 10 have been observed at dusk going into the box near our front door. Sensible birds. So much warmer spending the night huddled together than to roost alone.
3. The RSPB has been reminding us to provide food and water for garden birds during this big freeze.



MISTLE THRUSH