

Daily News Digest Service

JOURNAL

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NATURE NEWS

Wide variety of bird visitors in local garden

SOME time ago I mentioned the periodic occurrence of N. carolinensis with white in the wings, a phenomenon which has been noticed in the Estre area for some years now. On

March 28th in Leggatts Park, Little Heath, I saw two crows both of which had almost completely white wings, and very handsome they looked in flight. Oddly enough while I was in Dorset at the beginning of the month, I was walking along the top of the cliffs to the west of Lulworth Cove when I saw two jackdaws with a good deal of white in the wings.

On April 1st I visited the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' fine reserve at Arne on the edge of Poole Harbour in Dorset. The warden here, Bryan Pickens, is a former Middlesex resident and member of the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Trust for Nature Conservation, who decided to opt out of the rat race. He certainly has no regrets about the change, for at Arne one gets the feeling of being away from it all even at the height of the tourist season.

The star bird of this health-reserve is the Dartford warbler and one kindly obliged by perching on top of some gorse. An amusing sight was a fox being chased across a distant field by a number of screeching gulls. We also saw a few edgers, recently emerged from hibernation, lying in sheltered sunny spots on the heath.

In the garden

Garden birds continue to be of interest to local residents. Mrs. Charlton of St. Mary's Vicarage, Potters Bar, has sent me a list of birds seen in the garden over the past years and very impressive it is too. The list includes pheasant, green woodpecker, tawny owl, moorhen, goldfinch and a number of other species. In

addition to so many birds she has regular visits from a fox who, in summer, sits at the bottom of the garden and snaps at the crows! There is also a squirrel's den and plenty of hedgehogs. This all sounds to me very much like the ideal sort of garden to have.

The census of rookeries in Hertfordshire that I mentioned recently was being organised in going remarkably well and has already produced some interesting results. The nearest rookery to Barnet is in Wrotham Park where Mr. Roy Sanderson of Potters Bar, counted a total of over 70 nests. The rookery at Clare Hall, near South Mimms, is still in existence although it now has only about half the number of nests recorded in 1961.

Giving credit

I like to see credit given where it is due, and when a large industrial concern takes drastic action without being forced to do so, then they deserve acknowledgment. I refer to the action taken early in March by Monsanto Chemicals Ltd., sole United Kingdom manufacturers of P.C.B.'s or polychlorinated biphenyls, who have greatly curtailed its sales of these products so as to minimise further environmental contamination.

The level of P.C.B. residues found in arthropods in recent tests is disturbingly high and while the scientific evidence is far from conclusive, the signs are ominous. It is good to find that the chemical industry does have some morally responsible members in its ranks.

BRYAN L. SAGE

ROMSEY AND GURDIE L

Potters Bar Press
BARNET 72-16-14
Weekly Circulation 25,339

10 APR 1971

MONS 032300