



## REPORT ON BIRDS & MAMMALS ON THE WEST AND NORTH CHASE OCTOBER 2020

Last departures of hirundines were two late BARN SWALLOWS hurtling south over a west chase heath on 2nd October and 4 or 5 HOUSE MARTINS hawking for insects over fields on 6 October. (Hirundine: a songbird of the swallow family.)

By the beginning of October, the first of our winter avian visitors had already arrived in good numbers. Sometimes referred to as “Winter Thrushes” flocks of REDWINGS and FIELDFARES had made their presence known, converging on our Sussex heaths from foreign lands.

REDWINGS are from Iceland and Scandinavia. FIELDFARES are from Eastern Europe. They come here to escape harsher winters and particularly target the berries of Holly and Rowan. Listen overhead: if you hear a thin high “seep” from an overflying bird the size of a starling - that is the flight call of a Redwing and can often be heard at night when they are arriving. A loud raucous “chack, check” emitted from a grey-brown thrush the size of a Blackbird, alerts you to the presence of a Fieldfare, which show a silvery rump when they fly nervously away!



**Chiffchaff by Clive Poole**

Small numbers of summer-visiting tiny CHIFFCHAFFS, a warbler, remained in the gorse and bracken of the heaths, until the last I heard departed on 18 October from the North Chase: most will spend their winter in lands bordering the Mediterranean (wish I could!).

The Fallow deer rut could also be heard in October on the North Chase: such a wild evocative sound from the buck.



**Bucks by Tamsin Ricci**

This has been a very good year on the forest for CROSSBILLS, which arrive from Europe whatever time of year the pine harvest fails on the Continent.



**Crossbill by Clive Poole**

They use their crossed-over mandibles for prising the pine nuts out of the cones. Notice them in flight by their strong call “chip-chip” as they land, usually in a small flock, on the top of a Scots pine. Males are orange to red in colour while females are various shades of green.

Their relative the LINNET, another finch, now in drab brown & buff plumage, roosts in gorse thickets on the Forest, so is best seen early morning or late afternoon.



**Linnet by Clive Poole**



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In contrast our GOLDFINCHES retain their bright plumage throughout the year. They are attracted to thistles wherever they crop up on Ashdown.



**Goldfinch by Clive Poole**

To cap off the month A JACK SNIFE was a surprise find skulking on waterlogged ground between tussocks of purple moor grass on 28 October.

**CLIVE POOLE, Voluntary Ranger 21/10/2020**