

Further Observations of a Woolaston Garden_Winter 2020-21

David Priddis

Christmas came early for a flock of Redwing this year. They stripped all the berries off a well-berried 10m high holly in a few days in mid-November. For once the branches I cut and put in water in the greenhouse did not get eaten by mice !



Winter does give an opportunity to view some things easily; it reminded me that we have mistletoe, not only on most of our apple trees, but also on weeping willow and on two different species of maple. There seemed few mistle berries this year which may have partly accounted for the lack of Mistle Thrushes, too.



A Flower stem on a Smoke Bush (*Cotinus*) was transformed, after a frost, into an 'Ice Bush'.



Lichen is easy to see as well.



A rare dry day in late January was a good time to repair woodpecker damage to an old nest box and to clean out last Summer's bucketful of twigs, failed eggs and droppings from the kestrel-type box used each year by Stock Doves. They really are very messy nesters but must work hard to collect all this nest material every year.



Stock Doves are very shy but up to three came for some seed on the lawn, during this Winter



An old oak barrel, used as a flower tub, had a spectacular fruiting body

On 3rd December we had a reminder that Spring was to come as both these Cowslip and Primrose plants produced some ill-timed flowers.



On the same date our *Parottia persica* tree also produced its tiny but spectacular flowers. It seems strange that any plants flower at that time, but it does originate in Iran.



The related Witch Hazel, *Hamamelis*, from Japan, has larger flowers, shortly after.

Winter insects are scarcer, generally, but I did find this *Oedemera femoralis* beetle. David Scott-Langley assured me that 'although it has a rarity status, it turns up in the county regularly. It hibernates so can be found all year round'.



We have been very surprised this Winter not to have seen any Bullfinches. We normally have these coming to Black Sunflower, but so far not even the buds on the Cheal's Weeping Cherry have tempted them. We hope they have no disease.



It is good to see up to six Greenfinches again. To date we have had no Redpoll and it was not until 27th / 28th February that we saw Siskin, Brambling and a single Hawfinch; then all three species arrived within 24 hours of each other!

