

Reay's Riveting Resumé: 9 – 15 January 2017

Among the duck species, **Goosander** were noted feeding on both the Avon at Brent Mill and a private lake, and also at the Avon Dam, where they roost each night. However, on a synchronised roost count across Dartmoor reservoirs at dawn on the beautiful morning of the 14th, only six were seen there, and only 38 on all reservoirs combined. These are much lower counts than expected in January, and it is thought that the full moon may have encouraged some birds to fly out before first light – and before the counters arrived. Other newsworthy duck included 61 **Teal** and six **Pintail** (rare on Dartmoor, so six is exceptional) at the Avon Dam, and far fewer **Wigeon** on the fishing lake than in recent weeks. Normally present until February, perhaps they've left early. But to go where?

The sewage works at The Marsh is the most reliable site for wintering **Chiffchaff** in the parish. At least four were present on the 9th, along with several **Goldcrests** and **Long-tailed Tits**, presumably all benefitting from the small insects in turn benefitting from the organic enrichment. However, it's not the sort of place to find wintering **Blackcaps**. Instead they are more likely to be noticed visiting garden feeders, and there were records in the week from Brakefield again, and now also from a garden in the centre of the village. Also making use of feeding stations are small numbers of **Yellowhammers** in two gardens in the Aish area, the only sites where they have been recorded so far this year.

In spite of the chilly weather, signs of spring have included displaying **Dippers**, drumming **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** and a steadily increasing volume of song. Even though the moor was dressed in a light covering of snow on the 14th, several **Reed Buntings** and a **Stonechat** were found upstream of the Avon Dam reservoir, and a couple of **Meadow Pipits** on Brent Moor.

We'll continue the RRRs until the end of January. Please send any interesting sightings for next week, to peter.p.j.reay@btinternet.com by 6 pm on Sunday.