



## Wildlife diary: a year for the birds

By Linda Mitchell

**Early spring saw sunny days, with birds singing by 5am. During February's heavy snowfall, all birds seemed reluctant to take scraps I left out, though parakeets fed on the nut feeders, oblivious to falling snow. Magpies and blue tits had already started nesting.**

During March, a very large "buzzard type" bird hovered above. Crows chased it off, but kept their distance. I spotted it twice more, above the covered reservoir in Woodside Avenue, and towards Southern Road.

April brought very noisy baby magpies, ladybirds, bumble bees, and a few butterflies. No frogs!

Whenever parakeets come, there are no other birds around. By May, I was so concerned that the woodpecker had not visited that I took the feeders down for a bit, to deter the parakeets from over-feeding. Swifts appeared around 17 May, the latest I have seen them arrive since I started my wildlife diary seven years ago.

### Rain, rain, rain

In summer, I wondered whether the rain would ever stop. A bedraggled woodpecker came to feed, followed by two young, which was an encouraging sight. One mid-summer evening, after a really heavy downpour, a beautiful

green woodpecker drank from a puddle on the patio. I also heard my first thrush.

A sparrowhawk tried to take a robin. It had been more successful in Lanchester Road, where I saw a mutilated wood pigeon with feathers everywhere.

A new visitor is a wood-mouse. He darted from one side of the garden to the other, stopping just long enough to gather fallen nuts from the feeder. His ears are enormous!

One late summer evening, I heard the thrush singing from the top of one tree, and a blackbird from the other. Then a robin joined in, followed by a flock of swifts screeching across the garden.

It was a sight to see mum and dad blackbird with their three babies, all squashed up in the birdbath together. I saw starlings all summer, and the fox visits nightly, as does the owl, who hoots into the early hours.

Winter is upon us, and I am watching my garden wildlife closely...

## Local legend reaches 103

By Daphne Chamberlain

**Dauntless Dorothy Ditcham, of Lincoln Road, passed another milestone at the end of October. She is now 103. A friend and neighbour, Margaret McAlister, told us that she has made an excellent recovery from a stroke she suffered last year, and thoroughly enjoyed her birthday party.**

Described by Margaret as "our local legend", Dorothy has always been one to laugh and enjoy herself.

She first came to East Finchley in 1911, later returning to settle in the same family house where she still lives today. Memories she has shared with *ARCHER* readers include playing in Coldfall Wood when it stretched up to Fortis Green, and local residents had keys to get in.

She went with her family to East Finchley's new cinema, then called the Picturedrome, now the Phoenix, and danced at the Athenaeum at Muswell Hill, where Sainsbury's is today.

In the East Finchley of her childhood, Hahn's the baker stood where Chorak is today and brought round trays of cakes on Saturdays. Convalescing World War One soldiers, wearing bright blue trousers and jackets and red ties, sat outside their nursing home in Fortis Green.

A well-travelled lady from a musical family, Dorothy once told *THE ARCHER* that she thrived on meeting interesting people and doing interesting things.



Dorothy Ditcham enjoying her party with friends and relatives. Photo courtesy Margaret McAlister

## Help a hedgehog

By Caroline Broome

**Hedgehogs hibernate between November and mid-March. Try to keep aside a hedgehog-friendly area of garden, with heaps of leaves and brushwood. If you have to light a bonfire, always check that there are no animals sheltering in the middle of the pile.**

After mid-October hedgehog orphans found weighing under 500g, if left, will probably die. They need to put on weight to see them through the winter. You can provide temporary shelter indoors, such as a garage or shed. Place the hedgehog in a large box with plenty of clean, fresh hay, crumpled newspapers or dry leaves.

Very young orphans should be kept warm. A hot water bottle wrapped in a towel is ideal. Feed them two heaped tablespoons of food daily, such as tinned dog food, and include small amounts of crushed dog biscuits to provide bulk and roughage.

On reaching a weight of between 550g and 680g, the young hedgehog, if active and while the weather is still relatively mild, can be released at night back to the area where it was found, to hibernate. Continue to provide food and

a shelter with nesting material to help the hedgehog build a winter nest.

### RSPCA Clinic fund raising

Thanks to all the locals who visited our sale at RSPCA Small Animal Clinic on Saturday 29 September. All monies raised go towards the upkeep of the Clinic. A personal thank you to David Broome, who bleached his hair blond for a bet and raised funds for the Clinic.

## Who lived in your house?

**Some readers may know that pop singer George Michael was born in a house in Church Lane, that Mick Jagger once lived in a flat on the corner of High Road and Huntingdon Road and that Peter Sellers lived in a High Road flat too.**

Did someone famous ever live in your house or did something noteworthy happen there? Let us know by emailing [the-archer@lineone.net](mailto:the-archer@lineone.net) or writing to *THE ARCHER*, PO Box 3699, London N2 8JA. You can also leave a message on our phone line 08717 334465.

## KALASHNIKOV KULTUR

By Ricky Savage, the voice of social irresponsibility

### It's that time of year again...

**It's December. You can't move for holly, and shops everywhere have 'Carols You've Come to Loathe' blasting out of a trashy sound system. And now the turkeys are voting early for Christmas. I don't think they meant to, mostly because I've met garden furniture that's more intelligent than the average turkey, but catching flu in November is a good way to miss out on the stuffing. If you're a turkey, that is.**

As the thought of a mass cull leads to panic buying in the supermarkets of Britain, I rejoice at the thought of not being force fed something as dull, dry and tasteless as turkey. If I'd been one of the Pilgrim Fathers the sight of turkey at the first Thanksgiving dinner would have had me on the next boat home.

It's not that I don't like turkeys, I'm sure they make wonderful pets, but being forced to eat the damn thing for the first half of January is something else.

So, as the last remaining turkey in London is auctioned at Sothebys, what the hell are the rest of us going to eat? It's got to be something ecologically sustainable, free range and flu free.

They say you're never more than 10 feet from a rat, so how about getting Jamie Oliver to come up with a recipe for roast rat with cranberry stuffing? Or maybe Delia could devise something to do with grey squirrels, perhaps casseroled with hazelnuts.

Maybe we could clean up London by eating a pigeon each. Nigella could do something with cream. It might be the start of a whole new way of celebrating Christmas: a low carbon emission eco-friendly pigeon would be enough to turn anyone vegetarian. It certainly works for me.



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