

## February News

Although February is classed as a winter month, the first signs of spring are already starting to appear, especially if there are warm day time temperatures. Indeed on the return walk from our last work day in January, I noticed that there were a few bushes of hawthorn showing first leaves as well as elder and a lot of the dig rose. All be it all of these were in sheltered parts of the woodland.

The resident birds are still visiting the Woodland Hide feeding station and the bird table by the Tower, but you can start to see the return of species usually seen only on the mossland such as Reed Bunting and Yellowhammer. Their arrival increases the chance of beating the record of 20 species during a visit.



Reed Bunting



Yellowhammer

These species will eventually nest on the mossland and arrive back early to start claiming territories. They were driven off in the autumn by the lack of food. As food on the mossland is still scarce in the early spring, they often take the opportunity to 'refuel' at the feeding stations.

Although there are no leaves on the deciduous trees yet, some are already starting to show flowers as a further indicator of spring. Most noticeable are the white flowers on the branches of the Blackthorn (the source of sloe berries), the yellow hanging catkins on the Hazel, and the 'Pussy Willows' on the various Willow species trees on the site. These in turn provide pollen for early flying bumblebees, particularly the Red-tailed Bumblebee. If the weather is particularly warm, you may see the early flights of butterflies that have over-wintered as adults. The most likely species you can see is the bright yellow coloured Brimstone. It is thought that the similarity of the yellow colour of this species to that of butter is the reason they are called butterflies.



**Red-tailed Bumblebee**

**Brimstone Butterfly**