

## March News

Although March is formally the start of spring, there can still be some wintry days. The volume of bird song increases through the month as the resident birds start to set up breeding territories. Even so, many will still be popping in to the feeding stations, particularly the one by the Tower, for a quick meal. Increasingly, you can see more aggression as birds start to claim breeding territories, which can spill over into the eating areas. During this month, many of the birds that came over from Scandinavia to avoid the winter start to drift back towards the east coast prior to returning to their breeding grounds. Some, such as Brambling and Redwing can occasionally be seen around the feeding stations.



Brambling



Redwing

Towards the end of the month, the first summer visitors start to arrive. Usually, the first to be detected is the Chiffchaff, with its unmistakable repetitive “chiff-chaff-chiff” song heard high up in the trees. It is quite an inconspicuous plainly coloured small bird, not much bigger than a Blue Tit, but slimmer. It is not easy to spot and becomes even more difficult when the trees start to produce leaves. It looks very similar to its cousin the Willow Warbler, but that species does not arrive until April, seldom comes into woodland, and has a melodic song that easily separates it.



Chiffchaff

As the weather warms, there is increased activity in the site ponds. You should look out for Frogs spawning and, if you are patient, you may see Smooth Newts. Please note that all of the ponds also contain larger Great Crested Newts, but these are seldom seen in daytime.

**The Great Crested Newt is a nationally rare, protected species. Its presence means that there cannot be any pond dipping in any of the site ponds because of the risk of disturbance.**