



South Wirral Watch

January 2010



Letting you know what to look out for this month at
Dibbinsdale LNR and Eastham Country Park

Welcome to our new *Whats On Listing* for wildlife in the South Wirral area. This is compiled by the combined forces of The Friends of Dibbinsdale and Eastham Country Park, in conjunction with the rangers service at both sites.

It is meant to be a seasonal **what could be seen** rather than what has been seen listing. However we would welcome anyone who visits the sites to keep us informed about things of interest you have seen. In order to do this, you could email us www.petermiller@wirral.gov.uk, or just call and tell the rangers at both sites. We are aiming to keep a monthly listing of some of the wildlife moments to look out for during the coming year. We will also 'post' them on our websites www.dibbinsdale.co.uk and www.easthamcountrypark.co.uk and email them to anyone who wishes to receive them.



In the **'Bird Garden' at Eastham** (going through the visitors centre at the the back) you will find a regular throng of the birds you would expect to see in our gardens at this time. Best described as 'picadilly with feathers'. Where there is food there is usually wildlife. You might have a competition to see how many grey squirrels you can see at one time ! (20 is a good score) Water is also a good focal point for wildlife too. With this being frozen it is a valuable source when found. Wood pigeons, chaffinches, blackbirds, robins, wrens and the Tit family form the bulk of the visitors with jays, magpies and great spotted woodpeckers and nuthatches popping in.

Ed Samuels from the BTO (British Trust for Ornithology) comes and 'rings' birds here. He catches them in a mist net he puts up. The birds are ringed and a record of bird movements and populations has been

built up in the area. The BTO issues reports of what trends and findings they make. The migration within the region of quite common birds in the winter period is notable.



Curlew in large numbers feeding on the grass in Chapel Walks (on the boundary of the woods off Ferry Road) are another common sight when the tide is right. On the mud and sand banks off Eastham Ferry can be seen large flocks of waders moving about when the tide is out. (Oyster Catchers mingle with gulls, dunlin and shellduck). The sea anglers who can be seen on the waterfront are catching cod at this time of year. Some quite big fish (4lb plus) have been caught.

The Redwing.

This migrant in the thrush family is the bird worth looking out for. They will move in to our region from the cold European continent in large numbers when temperatures plummet there.



Flocks of these birds can often be seen around Bodens Hey Meadow at Dibbinsdale. They will be feeding on the last of the berries on bushes and trees



First Signs of Spring

Snowdrops are the most well known of all the early signs of spring. Can you 'beat' January 12th for the first snowdrop spotted in flower in this area?

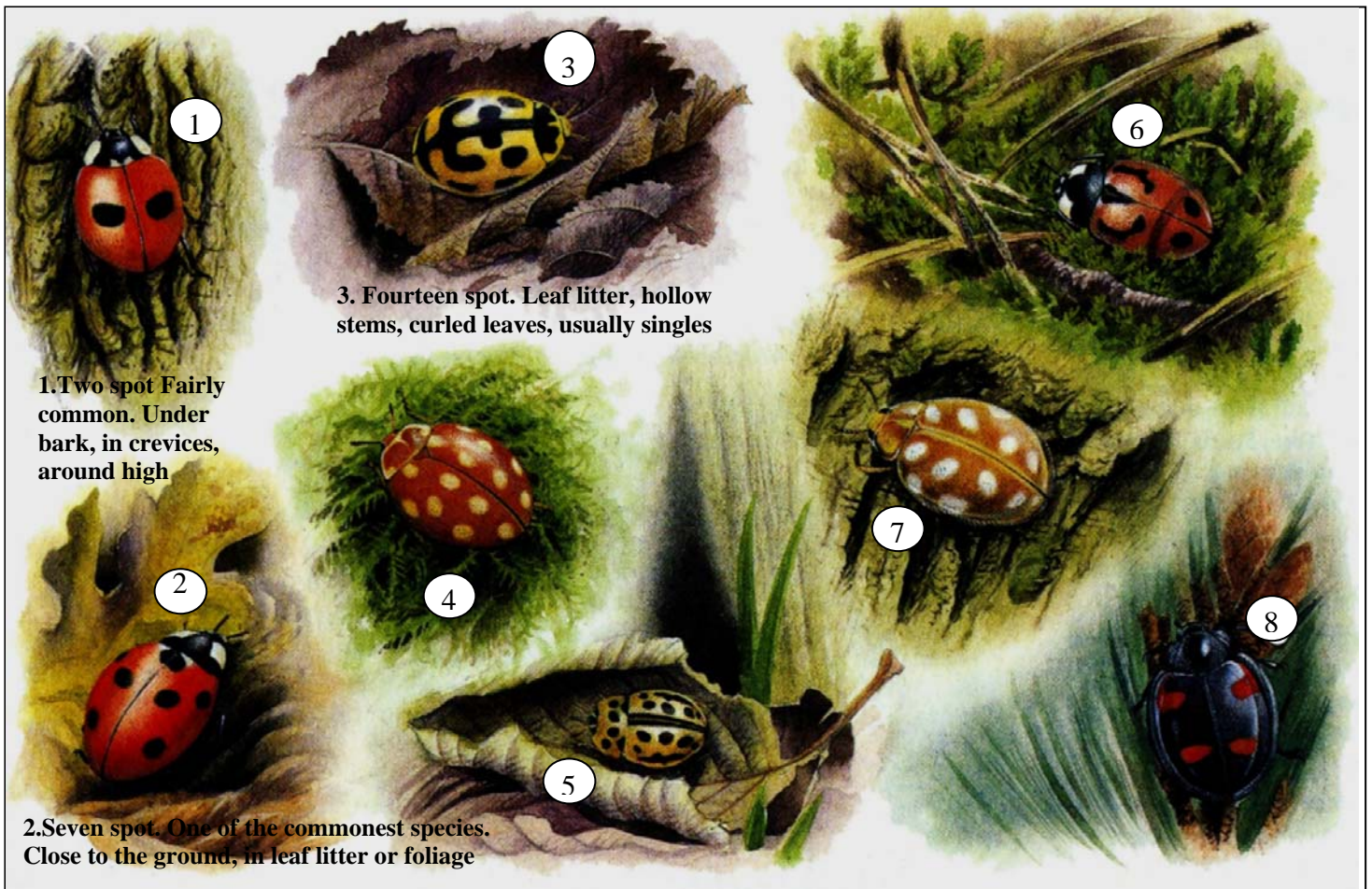
Look at Dibbinsdale on the river bank by Poulton Bridge to see some of the best carpets of these iconic flowers.



At Dibbinsdale, **Hérons** stand in the shallow reedbed pools waiting for fish in the newly dug pools. Small groups of Teal 'whistle' around the water edge. Moorhen and if you are very lucky, water rail and mandarin ducks can be seen wandering about the river banks. The grey wagtail is a lively and colourful visitor around the Otters Tunnel area.

Overwintering ladybirds

The bright colours of the 42 species of ladybirds in Britain warn predators of their bitter taste. Many ladybirds, which overwinter under loose bark, in chinks in walls or pressed up against window sills and frames hibernate en masse. Though renowned for their aphid killing habits, some –such as the sixteen spot and orange ladybirds – scrape mildew from leaf surfaces, while the pine ladybird attacks scale insects on tree trunks.



- 1. Two spot. Fairly common. Under bark, in crevices, around high
- 2. Seven spot. One of the commonest species. Close to the ground, in leaf litter or foliage
- 3. Fourteen spot. Leaf litter, hollow stems, curled leaves, usually singles
- 4. Cream-spot. Hedgerows or woodland
- 5. Sixteen spot. Leaf litter around fence posts, under bark mustard yellow colour
- 6. Heiroglyphic. Heathy areas. In heather, pine or bracken foliage

- 7. Orange. Leaf litter or under bark; particularly associated with sycamores
- 8. Pine. Bark crevices in evergreen or dead foliage in pines, ash and other trees