



the Chiffchaff. Chiffchaffs, being tiny birds (just over 4 inches long) do not take part in the dawn chorus since they are still asleep! When they sing they give a rather monotonous “chiff-chaff, chiff-chaff, chiff-chaff” song (hence their English name) from the bare branches of a tree. Often if you hear a regular “tweet” from a tree you may well be hearing a little Chiffchaff. Our breeding Chiffchaffs will have arrived from Iberia or north Africa where they spent a warmer winter before the urge to migrate brought them back to us. They will make their little nests on the ground, strangely, in undergrowth in a wood. Chiffchaffs have a close relative, the WILLOW

WARBLER, which arrives in England slightly later, in early April. Willow Warblers seem to have been adversely affected by climate change. Since springs and summers in lowland Britain have become warmer they tend to breed in greater abundance in upland Britain. However, Ashdown Forest, at higher altitude than our villages, remains cool enough for them to stay to breed there. Male Willow warblers have a charming silvery high-pitched song, which they invariably render from scrub: willow



## Danehill and Chelwood Gate Report on Which New Birds You Might Expect To See and Hear in Late March and Early April in Your Local Woods and Copses

As the weather improves during late March & early April we can all look forward to hearing **two** birds to add to the songs of Song Thrush, Great Tit, Robin, Dunnock, Chaffinch, Greenfinch and Blackbird which we have been hearing with increasing frequency as the days have lengthened on the approach of spring.

two new songsters are the **Chiffchaff** and the **Blackcap**. The first to break into song in late March is



,sallow, birch or gorse and can best be distinguished from Chiffchaffs by their pinkish flesh-coloured legs and feet: Chiffchaffs have dark blackish legs and have a more grubby and less “clean” plumage.

So to the second special songster in our villages, the **Blackcap**. Also a member of the warbler family, but considerably bigger and stockier at 5.5 inches. Strangely, and also a consequence of climate change and our milder winters, the male Blackcap which we may be lucky enough to hear singing from a bare branch in late March or early April will probably have come from southern Germany. Instead of migrating south in autumn



from Bavaria along the risky migration route over the Alps to Africa some birds a couple of decades ago , made a mistake, flew west to southern Britain and survived our milder winters often taking bird food and apples left out in our gardens for our resident birds.

By early April these “foreign “Blackcaps (the female has a brown cap –the only member of our warblers where the sexes have distinguishable different plumages) will have left our villages to return to their breeding grounds on the Continent (without needing vaccine passports!!).

Almost immediately, their places will be taken by our own breeding Blackcaps, which, having wintered in southern Iberia or North Africa, and will be quick to establish their territories here . Male Blackcaps will start to render their lovely sweet song , almost as rich and powerful as that of our Blackbirds and coming from a much, much smaller bird. Isn't nature wonderful.

CLIVE POOLE, VOLUNTEER RANGER, ASHDOWN FOREST. 17.2.2021




### Check it out! Which bird is pictured in each photograph?

Photos, top to bottom: chiffchaff, blackcap, willow warbler, willow warbler, blackcap.

**Please Be Aware**

From April until the end of July

Rare birds are nesting on or close to the ground in heather/gorse.  
Please keep everyone on the main tracks for the next few weeks.

To a bird this  looks like 

If the parent bird is forced to flee the nest. 

To a nearby crow this  looks like 

**Disaster!**