

## Valentines Day

February 14<sup>th</sup> is traditionally the day on which the birds start to sing. The tradition certainly held good this year – February 14<sup>th</sup> happened to be both sunny and mild and on this day I heard the first real songs of Wren, Song Thrush and Chaffinch in the garden. Also the first “wheeze” of a Greenfinch and a couple of days later, the repetitive cooing of Collared Doves. Of course the Robins have been singing on and off all through the winter, as they maintain territories in the winter unlike most birds.

It is interesting that Valentines Day date still seems to still mark the start of singing, even though there are many indicators to tell us that spring now arrives up to 3 weeks earlier than it used to, and even though we have had a mild winter. Perhaps singing in birds is triggered by day length, and therefore is not sensitive to temperature, whereas activities such as nest building and egg laying are dependant on food supply, which is in turn dependant on temperature. These activities do indeed take place earlier now, in our warmer springs.

Footnote: The Brent Goose with the two yellow rings which spent much of January at Pickleridge Pools has now turned up in Co Kerry in Ireland. This means that it is definitely the bird which was ringed in Co Kerry last spring and is just a few years old. It is not a record-breaking 34 year old bird from the East Coast as was first thought!

*Rosemary Royle*