

VILLAGE DIARY

The weather is getting really Christmassy with white frosts and chill winds. The Christmas Tree Festival was really spectacular this year, such care and creativity in the way the trees were decorated and in their presentation.

John Lea returns to his observations on carrion crows. He finds them so interesting because of their reputation as the most intelligent of birds and because the two he has on his patch monopolise the wildlife. Although there are no rings on their legs or distinctive markings, he is sure that they are the same pair that have nested in his garden for several years. It is hard to tell sexes but John believes the female is the one that was hand reared and then tuned out, but lost its original mate. Devotion runs deep because it stayed by the body for four days and then, several weeks later, turned up with another mate, that was very cautious in that first winter but has since learned to be craftily bold. Last year John told us how one youngster refused to be driven away in the autumn and kept coming back, even watching its parents build this year's nest. There were only two young this year and they were driven away this autumn but last year's stray is still here.

On TV some wildlife events are shown and it is claimed that that is typical of the species. John saw one film showing the life of a fox, but to his countryman's eyes there were definitely two different foxes in the film. The shots were put together just to make up the story. In John's experience many happenings are seen but once in a lifetime. This third carrion crow attached to his pair is one of these instances. We shall wait to hear if he leaves home this year and chooses a mate. It is interesting to hear that crows do have the ability to overcome their inherited behaviour patterns, even if only rarely.

It is time again to wish our readers a happy Christmas and a good New Year. 2019 is to be a momentous year for our parish and for our country. Change is in the air and we pray that all will turn out for the best on our little patch and nationally.

Barbara Wilson