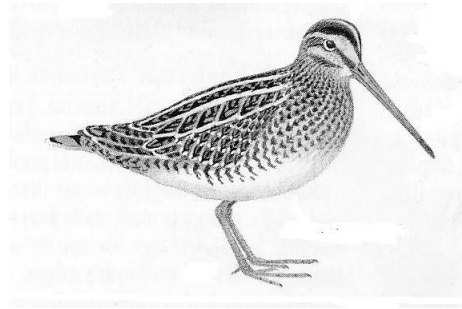


Birds in Cold Weather

The recent spell of cold weather had a very significant effect on our local birdlife. I expect many of you noticed how many Snipe there were around in the fields, often feeding in full sunshine during the day, and also coming into gardens to feed on the lawn. These birds need soft ground, which they probe with their long bills searching for worms and other creatures. When the ground is frozen they will move westwards looking for milder conditions in places like coastal Pembrokeshire. But when the ground freezes here the Snipe are in serious trouble and then have to resort to unusual behaviour in the struggle to find enough food to stay alive.



Although it was hard for the Snipe, it was wonderful to have such close views in bright light. The chestnut, brown and black streaking on the plumage is quite beautiful and the bill really is very long – often longer than in this picture.

The same circumstances apply to Lapwing and Golden Plover, both of which became common in the fields as the freeze progressed. But they also would have been unable to find much food in the frozen conditions, and although some may have managed to fly to Ireland many others will have undoubtedly perished.

Rosemary Royle

Footnote: I couldn't help comparing the above to the current situation in Western Australia where thousands of budgies are dying in a 50 degree heat wave. It is certainly true that all wild creatures have many challenges to face, and extreme temperatures are just one of them.