

2015 Winter Solstice – Lower Tamar Lake to Dexbeer Bridge – 23rd December

After what seemed like weeks of torrential rain, high winds and dense mist – often all at the same time, the day, as forecast, dawned clear, bright and dry.

The canal footpath was soft and frequently very muddy but always passable. Leafless trees gave good views but there did not seem to be many birds either visible or audible.

On this length, the canal was almost always well watered and many stands of Hemlock Water Dropwort were emerging. As usual every section had one or two flowering Red Campion and Birch were bearing their catkins ready for warmer spring days to encourage them to open.



Coming out of cover, I was surprised and delighted to see first one pair and then another of Roe Deer. I'm not sure if it was me or the bangs and whistles of a hunting party on nearby Dexbeer Hill that startled them.



Shooting Party

Roe Deer

Virworthy Farm was particularly good for a wide range of common birds; Blackbird, Song Thrush, House Sparrow, Starling, Blue and Great Tits as well as the not so common winter visitors, Redwing and resident Jay. This no doubt explains the presence of a Sparrowhawk at Cape Horn.



Hazel Gloves was again found, close by and eagerly recorded



Hazel Gloves *Hypocreopsis rhododendri*

Turkey Tail
Trametes versicolor



.At Wooda Bridge, a man and youth were busily re-building the stone bridge piers. Volunteers from Bude Canal Trust had cut down the trees, but the remaining roots had pushed out the stonework. These two were making a good job of renovating the bridge.

I did not see a single invertebrate, but there were plenty of birds and of course the Roe Deer more than made up for their absence. Of course, it was fungi season with plenty of species seen and identified – Blushing Bracket (*Daedaleopsis confragosa*), Common Jelly Spot (*Dacrymyces stillatus*), Common Funnel (*Clitocybe nebularis*), Turkey Tail (*Trametes versicolor*), Bleeding Broadleaf Crust (*Stereum rugosum*), Jelly Ear (*Auricularia auricula-judae*), Common Ink Cap (*Coprinopsis atramentaria*) and of course Hazel Gloves (*Hypocreopsis rhododendri*)