

# Nature notes

Winter – short days, cold nights, leaden skies and heavy grey seas pounding shingle against the cliffs? But there is colour in the winter landscape: a green haze of autumn-sown crops against the rich brown of ploughed fields; the fawn stubble of the harvest field that provides good feeding for seed-eating birds such as linnets; and the bare brown branches of oak woodland interspersed with patches of dark green conifers.

Berries remain in the hedgerows – food for the flocks of fieldfare and redwing. In the garden, we are cheered by robins

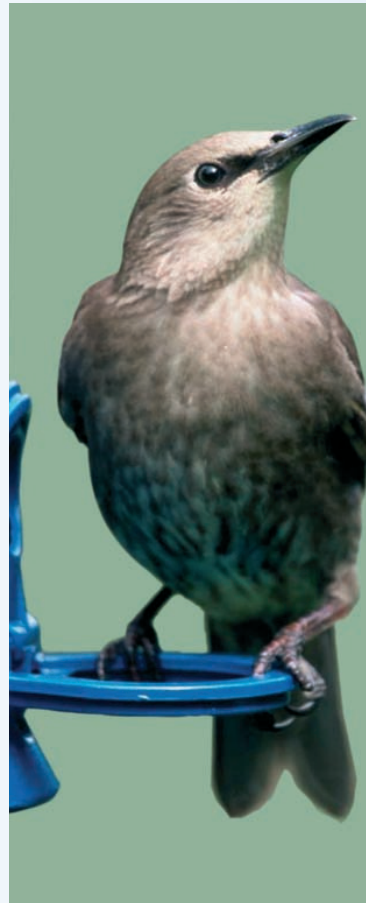
and blue tits. In larger gardens and parks, you may see a green woodpecker with its distinctive red cap and noisy laughing call searching for anthills.

Along the estuaries wigeon, wintering here from the north of Russia, make a low whistling call. Their plumage is predominantly grey with a bright chestnut coloured head, a pale yellow crown and pink breast. In contrast, the high-pitched call of the kingfisher is often heard before it skims by with a distinctive flash of orange and turquoise.

When the cloud lifts and the sun

breaks through, look for the rainbow sparkle on hoar frost in the early morning rays, the bright blue of the mid day sky and the multicoloured canvas of the sunset. Catch the final rays of the fiery sun as it dips beneath the horizon – the sea burnished with gold and the sky streaked with shades of peach, apricot, rose and vermilion. And then turn round to see the silver moon rising into the inky sky, which as the night draws on, will be studded with stars.

*Anne Marston,  
assistant ecology  
officer*



## Seasonal hint for wildlife in your garden

Garden birds will benefit from food put out for them as the natural supplies begin to dwindle. Special seed mixes are available but food scraps, including fat, will also be appreciated.

It is important that food does not go mouldy. Bird feeders and tables, if not regularly cleaned, can be a source of infection.

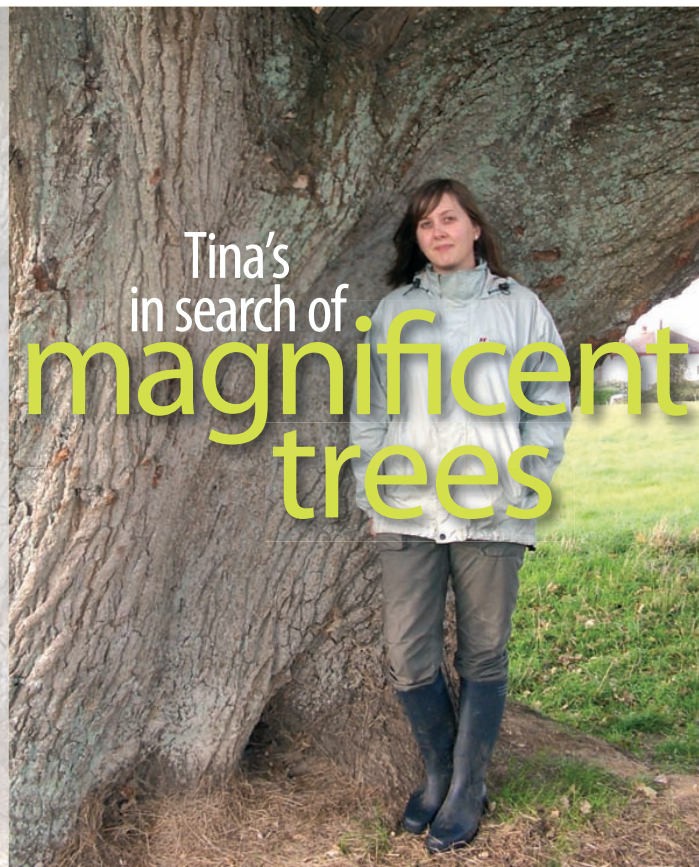
Birds will welcome a supply of fresh drinking water if an icy spell causes ponds and puddles to freeze over.

A National Lottery-funded project to identify and record the Island's most magnificent trees and their heritage, is now underway.

The Histree Trail Project has been up and running for several weeks, with project officer Tina Williamson (pictured) taking up her new role in November. She will see the two year project through from start to finish, working three days a week, based at the council's parks and countryside section.

The project will take her out to meet people and organisations that have information regarding magnificent trees and/or local heritage.

She said: "We're looking for magnificent trees and stories that go with them. We want to know about the trees in your area – and especially the things you know about them. Perhaps someone famous planted a tree, or maybe it marked the spot where something once was. Or it could be personal to you – perhaps your mum



used to tell you a story about it! If you want to get involved please contact me."

The project will go on to publish some of these stories with a series of walking and cycling trails across the Island.

The Histree Trail Project has brought to the Island a £47,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund; the culmination of several years work by local volunteers Pete Dyer, Gill Salter, Roy Brinton and Charles McNamara. The development works and funding application were overseen by Karl Dyson, who as leading wildlife ranger is funded by *Leader+* monies secured through the Isle of Wight Economic Partnership, and the council.

• To get in touch with Tina Williamson, or provide details that might be included within the project, you can call the parks and countryside section on 823893 or email [histreetrail@iow.gov.uk](mailto:histreetrail@iow.gov.uk)