

## WINTER ROBINS

There is very little bird song at this time of year, due mostly to the short days and long nights. Garden birds need to feed during daylight hours in order to build sufficient fat reserves to sustain them through the long, cold nights. Also, territories become relaxed, so there is little or no need to be singing to affirm territorial boundaries. The one exception from this rule is the robin. Robins hold individual winter territories, and frequently declare their territorial ownership by singing. Females establish their own territories and therefore sing just as enthusiastically as males. Intruders into robin territories are violently expelled, so it is not unusual to see robins locked in combat. They are even known to fight to the death! Yesterday (November 12<sup>th</sup>) after a small job in Salway Ash, I waited for my lift in the lay-by near the school. I noticed a robin repeatedly flying to a small Fiat car. It was landing on the wing mirror pecking at its reflection. During my ten-minute wait, I observed this behaviour no less than around twenty times. I could not help thinking to myself, surely it would be better to get on with feeding and grooming rather than wasting time arguing with ones own mirror image! But robins are not the most intelligent of birds. Neither are they friendly, (which is how we often think of them) but rather grumpy and have the potential for extreme avian violence!

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