

very similar to the foot-stirring movements frequently seen by Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* feeding in shallow water; it was as though the vegetation was being kicked very gently, while occasionally the bird's outstretched neck was quivered from side to side. It was clear that the egret had seen a potential prey item and was coaxing it to move. For fully eight minutes the bird stood transfixed, making these occasional, delicate leg movements, until suddenly its head and

neck flashed downwards in a lightning-fast strike. The strike was accurate and I saw a Bank Vole *Clethrionomys glareolus* in the bird's bill. The egret stepped back into the lake, where it gave the dead vole a quick dip into the water before shaking it and after a further minute or so swallowed it whole.

Voles are known to form a regular part of the Great White Egret's diet but I have not come across any mention in the literature of this feeding method.

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Nectar feeding by Great Spotted Woodpecker in Devon

On 29th May 2018, I watched a Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* fly from a row of mature English Oaks *Quercus robur* across an open, rural garden at Milburn Orchard, Devon (SX 681 466). After 150 m it landed in a flower bed 'island' surrounded by lawn, and perched on the stem of a 'red-hot poker' *Kniphofia* sp., a genus of non-native perennial flowering plants native to Africa. The woodpecker proceeded to probe a number of individual flowers through their natural opening before flying off. Its behaviour was strongly reminiscent of similarly sized Australian nectar-feeding honeyeaters (Meliphagidae), which will often perch sideways on the strong stem of a flowering plant, such as *Banksia* sp. and even naturalised *Kniphofia* sp., before probing individual flowers to access nectar. Although it is possible that the woodpecker was searching for and consuming invertebrates residing inside these flowers, its behaviour

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suggested nectar feeding.

Great Spotted Woodpeckers are known for their varied diet and adaptability to seasonal changes in food availability, but this observation appears to be only the second documented example of nectar feeding by the Great Spotted Woodpecker; Lester (1992) also observed Great Spotted Woodpeckers feeding on the nectar of *Kniphofia* flowers. These observations suggest that nectar feeding may be a more widespread and commonplace behaviour than has been reported in reference works (e.g. Cramp 1985, del Hoyo *et al.* 2018).

References

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Green Woodpeckers feeding on apples

It is generally agreed that the Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* is a specialised feeder, eating mainly ants (Formicidae) and only occasionally turning to fruit, including apples (Cramp 1985). Observations in our Cambridgeshire garden over four successive winters, however, indicate that in some circumstances apples may become a regular and perhaps even significant part of the diet.

Our first observations of occasional visits

by a female Green Woodpecker to windfall apples, in early 2014, were not remarkable, but there was a dramatic change in February 2015, when we first put apples on the lawn for the local Blackbirds *Turdus merula*. A female woodpecker (presumably the same individual) soon began what turned into a series of almost certainly daily visits lasting until late March. A male, the first identified for certain, came down to the apples on the