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## Bournemouth Naturally

The Bournemouth Naturally project aims to build up a picture of biodiversity in Bournemouth through creation of a database of your wildlife sightings. Each month will feature a species, if you have seen it in your garden or local greenspace then please let us know.

Species of the Month: **December**

### Mistletoe

*Viscum album*



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**Ecology and Conservation:** This iconic Christmas plant is actually half parasitic. The plant has the ability to penetrate the host tree and tap into supplies of nutrients and water. However mistletoe is also an evergreen plant so can produce its own food all year round. The white berries are produced in winter; these will sometimes be eaten by birds such as mistle thrushes and fieldfares during harsh winters.

The traditional stronghold of mistletoe in the UK is the South West Midlands where it is associated with apple orchards. In recent years concerns have been raised about declines in mistletoe populations due to a loss of orchard habitats and traditional management.

**Identification:** Outside of apple orchards mistletoe has a variety of host trees including Lime, Poplar and Hawthorn.

It is most likely to be found in open habitat such as on trees in parks, gardens, streets, cemeteries and along riversides. This is a perfect time of year to spot mistletoe up in the branches of its deciduous host trees. Clumps of mistletoe on tree branches usually appear from the ground as being roughly round in shape, sometimes with several clumps present in one tree.

**Records:** Mistletoe has been recorded in Bournemouth in the past but there is currently little information about exact locations and extent of distribution. If you have spotted any growing on trees in your street, local park or greenspace then please let us know.

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