

Country Notes for June 2017

One of the many pleasures of a new puppy is all the extra walks I am now getting out in our beautiful countryside. So thanks Bracken, for what happened a few days ago! We were walking through the Hollingbourne Meadows Trust and I was already feeling rather pleased with myself for mentioning whitethroats in last months' Country Notes. Their thin, scratchy call could be heard everywhere. I had been rather worried that, like a lot of summer migrants this year, there seemed to be very few around. Not in the Meadows Trust!

The highlight of the walk was yet to come however. Chatting to Ben and his team, who were busily getting ready to plant trees, I suddenly heard the rich sounds of a nightingale coming from the far side of the field. Their call may best be described as a rich warble, interspersed with whistles and a loud repeated chuck, chuck sound. Honestly – it is a wonderful sound and a lot better than my description! Sadly the birds themselves are dark brown and completely unremarkable. It is their call which makes them so special! They like scrubby growth in hedgerows – so a big 'well done' to the Meadows Trust for creating the habitat for what is a rapidly diminishing species in Kent.

More treats were still to come for, as we headed back towards the village, we were thrilled to see a hobby, which I also mentioned last month, flying over. Some of their favourite prey are the swallows and house martins which they catch on the wing. At the time of writing very few house martins have appeared in Kent and I hope that by the time you read this more will have managed to battle against the perpetual northerly airflow which has slowed down so many of our summer migrants this year.

Enjoy your next trip to the Meadows Trust. I certainly can't wait for my next walk with Bracken!

Andrew Snowdon