

Country Notes for April 2020

Last month in my Country Notes I wrote about the three little egrets that were to be seen flying over the Meadows Trust and that spent a lot of their time in the cow field adjacent to the Trust. As I write this in the second week of March they have been joined by another three. Six little egrets spending so long in a habitat that is not the normal one for them is extraordinary! However, I imagine that by the time you read this they will have departed for a more typical breeding area – but who knows!

April is a wonderful month for getting out and watching birds, as there is so much happening. By the beginning of the month the first swallows, with their forked tails and sand martins with their brown neck chains, should have arrived. They will have been joined by chiffchaffs, happily singing their names, willow warblers, with their tumbling bright call and wheatears, although wheatears are unlikely to be seen in our villages, unless taking a break as they pass through. However, the bulk of our summer migrants will arrive during April. House Martins, with their very obvious white rumps, should be with us in the second part of the month, although they were very late in arriving last year. We should even hopefully be hearing our first's nightingales in and around the village. In the Meadows Trust there will be the first whitethroats singing their scratchy call in the hedgerows and the breeding season for both residents and migrants should be well underway.

The Huckling Estate and our other woodlands should be vibrant with bluebells as the month progresses and cowslips should be taking over where the primroses left off. Most of our deciduous trees will be bursting into leaf, brightening our countryside with their fresh green colouration. Best of all, we will hopefully have finally shaken off the wet and windy weather that was with us for so much of the late autumn and winter.

There is so much to look forward to in April. It really is a month of hope and anticipation. If at all possible make sure that you get out and about, to enjoy all that it has to offer!

Andrew G Snowdon