

Country Notes for October 2022

Vita Sackville West, who created the wonderful gardens at Sissinghurst Castle, was known to use the phrase 'through leaves' to indicate that something was pleasurable or enjoyable. As we move into October and the first full month of autumn, the leaves will begin to fall in earnest and there will be many opportunities to walk through leaves and kick them ahead of ourselves as we look up at the trees with their branches becoming more and more bare. It is very easy to see why Vita thought that the phrase 'through leaves' was appropriate to indicate pleasure.

Some autumns provide us with a rich palette of colour as the leaves all seem to turn colour together. Often this is because there has been little wind or extreme weather to cause them to fall. In other years the process takes place over a number of weeks. This may well be one of those years, as many trees have already shed some of their leaves as a result of the recent drought and heatwaves.

In the meantime, there is much to see in our hedgerows, as blackberries move aside and other berries begin to colour up, providing food to birds and mammals alike. Later in the month there will be sweet chestnuts for us to gather and enjoy at home on the dark and longer nights. The last of the swallows and house martins will leave us this month and starlings begin to gather together, often in groups of youngsters, who may be identified by their bold spots and patches of brown, prior to moving into their adult plumage later on in winter.

This is a month of real transition and it is easy to forget to enjoy it for what it is, knowing that darker and colder days are ahead.

I shall certainly remember to enjoy it, as I walk my dogs through our ever changing countryside!

Andrew G Snowdon