

Country Notes for December 2022

This is the month when every other TV programme or advertisement seems to be Christmas related and there is no doubt that the opportunity to meet and enjoy the company of family and friends in a convivial setting is a wonderful break from normality. However, for many of us, when there is a break from the eating, drinking and socialising, it is good on Christmas Day or Boxing Day, and perhaps both, to get out into the countryside for a good walk and plenty of fresh air. Who knows what the weather will be like. It may be sunny, rainy, snowy, windy or frosty, but if we are well wrapped up, the chance to get out will be very welcome. Those of us with dogs will have the decision taken for us. Those beady eyes and happy faces give us no choice but to put on the wellies and head out into whatever the weather holds for us. I, for one, am glad of it too!

At first glance the late December countryside can often seem quite bare and bleak. However, nature is always there in its many forms. In the hedgerows there will be both signs of the months gone by and some early hints of the year to come. Tight buds are waiting for the days to get longer so that they may burst into fresh green once again but there will also be many berries that the birds and weather have left. Many of the red berries will already have gone as these are favoured by the birds and wildlife. The blacker berries of ivy however, will probably still be in evidence as the birds tend to leave these until last.

There are plenty of our resident birds to be seen, gathering food in the brief hours of daylight, and these will have been joined by winter migrants from Scandinavia and the north. Even birds which we consider to be natives will have had their numbers topped up by others of their species seeking refuge from the colder weather of northern Europe. These include birds such as blackbirds and starlings.

Christmas occurs at the time of the year when the days are at their very shortest, so the opportunity to get outside is quite brief. However, there is also the joyful thought that by 25th December the days are just starting to get longer again!

Don't forget to make the most of our wonderful countryside over the Christmas break, before heading back indoors to the warmth and conviviality of our homes and celebrations.

Merry Christmas!

Andrew G Snowdon