

Country Notes for March 2023

As I enjoyed my afternoon walk yesterday with Bracken and Tilly there was a distinct feeling of change in our countryside. In the gardens I passed there were snowdrops and aconites in flower, together with a few early daffodils. In the hedgerows there were plentiful supplies of catkins. Somehow the birds seemed busier than they had been for some time, and imagine my joy when high above I heard the first skylark for some time. Its relentless swirling call went on and on – and I was certainly in no hurry for it to end. It was a joy to be out and about!

Sadly however, for many of our birds the threat of bird flu still exists. For those of us with chickens this has created the inconvenience of having to keep our beloved hens away from all contact with wild birds, but for the wild birds themselves there is no protection. Let's hope that the epidemic starts to reduce before the nesting season begins. Sadly, I fear not.

There is also the added fear of trichomonosis at the moment. This disease of the gullet and throat is caused by a parasite that causes the throat to swell so that the birds can no longer eat. They actually appear to be eating a lot, but they cannot get any of it to go down. They therefore quickly lose condition and die.

There is a little that we can all do to help reduce these diseases, and that is to regularly clean any wild bird feeders in our gardens so that either of these diseases, if left on the feeders, are not passed on.

March is the month when, towards the end, we move into spring. This is a month when there is so much to look forward to as we slowly start to leave the dark and dank days of winter behind. Let's hope that as we do so our wild birds and our poultry enter a happier and safer time.

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