

Country Notes for July 2023

There is always something new to see as we walk the paths and byways of our villages, and the last few weeks have been no exception. In fact, my sightings have been a mixture of the good and the bad. At the time of writing, in mid June, we are experiencing high temperatures and strong sun, although for many weeks prior to this there was sunshine and no rain but strong arctic north easterlies which pegged the temperatures right back. Happily this changed right on queue for the Hollingbourne Village Fete!

Over the past few weeks I have had far more sightings of red kites in our villages than is normal, which has been lovely to see. One near the Pilgrims Way delighted me for ages when I was out walking with Bracken and Tilly, as it quartered the fields at low level before rising steadily higher and higher, drifting lazily off to the south. Another appeared with perfect timing over the arena at the beginning of the fete! I cannot help feeling that they may be nesting not far away.

What is disappointing, however, is the almost virtual disappearance of house martins from our villages. I saw a few in early May but they soon disappeared, presumably northwards. These beautiful birds were once abundant in Hollingbourne. Our villages have never supported large numbers of swifts but it has been good to see the usual ones around All Saints Church.

Insects have certainly suffered from the heat of last summer. There are very few butterflies around, although I have now seen a marbled white in my garden and a few meadow browns in our hay fields. What has been particularly noticeable has been the virtual absence of insects on our car windscreens, even after a long journey. Whilst this has saved us from sticky sessions washing them off, it is a somewhat alarming indicator of a much more worrying trend.

I wonder what the next few weeks will hold for both our weather and our wildlife.

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