

## Country Notes for September 2023

What a different summer it has been to last year with its record breaking temperatures. June saw a lot of dry and sometimes really quite hot weather, whereas July was one of the wettest on record and temperatures were routinely below what one would expect at this time of year. At the time of writing, August is proving to be a mixed bag, with optimistic weather forecasts frequently ending up in disappointment! With the arrival of September we have just over three weeks of summer left, with autumn officially beginning on 23<sup>rd</sup> September this year.

Late summer and early autumn is a time of plenty both in the countryside and in our gardens. I, like many gardeners this year, continue to be swamped with courgettes and beans – and what a pleasure to have the vegetable garden's plenty so frequently on our plates. Even more exciting is the prospect of enjoying the surplus being stored in the freezer through the winter months. In the hedgerows blackberries are cropping well, to the delight of birds and jam makers! Soon the best of the blackberries will be behind us but they will soon be followed by sloes, damsons and much later hazel nuts and chestnuts. All of this is wonderful free food for both us and our neighbouring wildlife. It is very important however that we leave plenty for the wildlife if we gather these delights when we are out. Harvesting rather than plundering should perhaps be our watchword.

This is also the time of year when, towards the end of the month, many of us will be starting to put out food on our bird tables, especially if the weather turns. This year, remember to give all your feeders a good wash to help reduce the spread of bird flu and other similar diseases that our wild birds have been susceptible to in recent years.

There is so much to enjoy in late summer and early autumn.

Andrew G Snowdon