

Country Notes for November 2023

As I write this in early October the weather still feels like summer and our gardens and countryside seem to agree. In the last few days I have seen swallows over the Meadows, heard a chiffchaff in Hollingbourne and seen yet another hummingbird hawkmoth. There have also been a fair number of butterflies, especially red admirals and peacocks. In Suffolk a few days ago there were house martins over Snape Maltings, which was a real treat as they have been almost non-existent in our villages this year. There were also geese flying over in v formation which I hoped would turn out to be white-fronted geese, also from the north – but they turned out to be just our resident greylag geese, albeit in rather large numbers.

However, the weather will turn very soon and the redwings and fieldfares from more northern countries will be flying into our country in readiness for the real cold to set in. Infact I have already heard a few redwings migrating in at night, uttering their high pitched peeping sound. Despite the weather there has been a hint of colour in some of our trees, and by the time you read this in November we will hopefully be treated to the vibrant colours of full blown autumn.

Many of our animals will soon be slowing down or hibernating and as ever it is good to remind ourselves that if we are piling up wood for a bonfire on Guy Fawkes night, to check that no hedgehogs have begun to hibernate in them. Their numbers have dropped dramatically in recent years and they need all the help they can get.

Autumn really is a wonderful time of year, especially when there are fine days and misty mornings. The smell of woodsmoke from bonfires and fires in the homes of our villages add to the ambience which tells us that it really is in autumn. Time to turn up our collars, get out those thick woollies and enjoy the season for all it has to offer!

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