

Country Notes for January 2024

I have a lodger in my cottage. She, for I think that is what she is, was uninvited and I didn't even see her enter my cottage. Despite the fact that she has slept for virtually the whole time she has been with me, she is most welcome. For several weeks she chose to sleep by the sitting room window, but the warmth of my cottage eventually forced her to rouse from her slumbers and say hello, mainly in the evenings. I enjoy her brief visits, prior to going back to sleep, and it has to be said that my springer spaniel Tilly is intrigued and follows her around the room with what I am rather worried to say is a little too much interest!

My lodger is of course a hibernating peacock butterfly, and she is indeed very welcome to stay with me for as long as she wishes. Several butterflies including peacocks, small tortoiseshells, commas and recently red admirals hibernate in sheds and buildings in the winter and will often appear on warm early spring days. Should the butterfly choose to fly around your home on one of these warmer days they can be encouraged to leave at that point, although not perhaps if there is the danger of really cold weather ahead. They certainly are to be seen in our gardens and countryside on warmer February days, although how many of them survive is debatable. They will provide the early breeding population which will give us many more later in the year.

If you find one in your home please make it welcome as it sleeps off the days of winter, and allow it to escape when it wishes when the first warmer days arrive. You will be so glad you did when you see its many relatives enjoying your garden later in the year!

A very Happy New Year to you all!

Andrew G Snowdon