

## Country Notes for March 2024

One of the great pleasures of a walk in our wonderful countryside at any time of the year is watching the changes that occur as month follows month and season follows season. March is a month of real change, as winter drifts into spring and so much seems to be happening. There are more flowers in the gardens that we pass, in particular daffodils in their wonderful array of yellow and cream. In the fields and hedgerows primroses brighten our walk and many other flowers are also making their presence felt. March is a month when change can often seem like a daily occurrence.

We will also be bidding farewell to our winter visiting birds this month as they head back north, whilst we welcome the first of our summer visitors, including chiffchaffs and possibly an early swallow or two.

There will also be surprises as the months and seasons pass. Just recently, whilst out walking Bracken and Tilly, I saw a bird which I have never seen in our villages before and I know of others who witnessed it too. It has the most remarkable plumage and is really quite large. To confuse matters it is a waterbird which had taken up temporary residence in a soggy field rather than a pond or lake! The bird in question was an Egyptian Goose. Like many other species, this introduced bird is now on the British list having created viable populations in the wild in this country. It had probably wandered from East Anglia or London, where they can, in some cases, be seen in good numbers. The plumage is quite stunning. In flight they have two very distinctive and large white wing bars. The adults have a brown eye patch and a brown ring on their necks. Their plumage is in general various shades of brown, although this makes the birds sound much duller to look at than is actually the case. The brown tends to be darker above and paler below. There is also some green and black in the wing and tail. It is actually a very distinctive bird and unlikely to be overlooked.

You never know what you will see next as you walk in our lovely countryside, whatever the time of year!

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