

Country Notes for April 2024

April is the first full month of spring and this is the month when there can usually be no doubt that winter is behind us and spring is really underway. Hopefully the rains of the last few months which have left our fields and gardens waterlogged, and which have taken a certain amount of pleasure out of walking, are now behind us.

This really is a month of change. Some trees and bushes will be beginning to show signs of green growth, elder being one of the early examples. In our lanes, fields and hedgerows primroses will continue to flower and will be joined by coltsfoot which looks very similar to a thickly stemmed and rather short dandelion. Tiny blue violets will also be in flower, joined towards the end of the month by starry white wood anemones. More and more bluebells will also be appearing, ready for their full display in early May.

At the beginning of the month some of our wintering migrant birds such as fieldfares and redwings will still be around but there will also be the first summer migrants arriving, often beginning with the first chiffchaffs and swallows. In fact this year I heard my first chiffchaff in my garden at the beginning of the second week of March! It is also wonderful to see so many of our resident and migratory birds flying into trees and bushes with beaks full of nesting material, knowing that they will soon be laying eggs and rearing their nestlings.

There will also be the first sightings of our early butterflies such as red admirals, small tortoiseshells, peacocks, brimstones and orange tips. Despite the generally very wet weather I saw my first yellow brimstone in my garden in the second week of March, on one of the few sunny days!

Perhaps you will be joining the Easter Trail organised by Hollingbourne Station in the first weekend of April. There will be lots to look out for if you do to add to the delight of all that chocolate!

Andrew G Snowdon