

Country Notes for July 2025

After a long period of warm and often quite hot weather with little or no rain, this season has, at the time of writing, become much more of a traditional English spring with some days of quite heavy rain and others when it has been dry and the sun has appeared. I'm sure that many farmers and gardeners were very relieved when the dry weather came to an end at such a crucial growing time of the year. I certainly was!

Early on in late winter and the first part of spring there were good numbers of the usual butterflies. Yellow brimstones, orange tips and holly blues appeared in our village in quite good numbers, as did red admirals, commas and peacocks. However just recently the butterflies we would expect to see have been few and far between. I have seen very few meadow browns and common blues and one adonis blue and just one marbled white for example.

However, one insect which I was very pleased to see so early in my garden was a hummingbird hawk moth, darting from one flower head of valerian to another. It is no surprise that some people on seeing these amazing moths really do think that they have seen a hummingbird! They beat their wings an astonishing 80 times a second, allowing them to hover in the same place as they feed. When finished they then dart off with incredible speed!

Hummingbird hawk moths are annual migrants to Britain and their numbers vary considerably from year to year. Although it is possible that a few occasionally overwinter, the majority fly to us from southern Europe and beyond. However, they do breed in this country, their caterpillars favouring bedstraw to feed on.

Let's hope that it is a good year for these lovely moths at least. They really are an astonishing sight to watch!

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