

Country Notes for February 2026

The recent cold spell with heavy overnight frosts and some snowfall in parts of our villages prompts one to marvel that wildlife and birds as small as a wren can survive. Some nights as I locked up my hens, and as I rushed back into my cottage to escape the cold, I found myself considering just how the wild creatures in our gardens and countryside were coping. Larger animals such as deer have the body size and build to cope but there is nothing to a small bird or mammal. Being a complete softy I have ensured that my hens have every crevice and opening blocked up on nights such as these, and I have even put old carpeting on their sheds in the hope that it would help to keep out the cold!

Clearly the wild creatures must find somewhere to shelter, which made me consider where exactly that might be. Ivy is certainly a good source of protection as it can be quite dense and I am sure that many small birds hide from the snow and ice deep in its foliage. Evergreen trees such as yew and conifers also provide some shelter too. Other creatures inevitably find cracks and crevices or holes in buildings to hide in for the night.

Heading out on an early frosty morning, well wrapped up, to open up my chickens I am always amazed at the cheerful sound of the birds singing in my garden! I would have thought that they had little to sing about, but obviously they do.

We can certainly help by not tidying up ivy and other evergreen shrubs until the worst of the winter is over. It is also good to put out food and water for the birds that visit our gardens. Water is especially important if all other sources of water are iced over and peanuts in a feeder are a good source of energy.

Every little helps, as the saying goes!

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