

Country Notes for March 2026

'As Mad as a March Hare' - or so the saying goes! However mad they might be, I like hares. Some people say that they have trouble distinguishing them from rabbits, but they are in fact very different. Rabbits are smaller and tend to be quite low to the ground. Hares on the other hand are larger, more upright and have dark tips at the end of their long ears. They can also run very fast!

The expression about March hares comes from their tendency during the mating season to box with other hares, jump vertically for no apparent reason and generally behave erratically. During March the male hares frequently chase the females and if the female is not interested she may turn on the male and engage him in a fight.

Hare coursing is a real scourge in some country areas and I am always pleased when I see that farmers have blocked off entrances to their fields to deter those who indulge in this barbaric activity.

I am always pleased to see one when I am out walking with my two spaniels as they are such noble creatures. I am just about to embark on a long rail journey and I am looking forward to using the time to read the book 'Raising Hare' by Chloe Dalton, who hand reared an abandoned baby hare. The book was given to me as a present at Christmas and I have been waiting for a good opportunity to settle down and enjoy it!

The hares we see on farmland locally are brown hares. These are a different species from the mountain hares which are found in some upland regions of our country and which turn white in winter to act as camouflage in the snow.

Brown hares were introduced by the Romans and during the early part of the 19th century there were 4 million in our country. Sadly this number is now down to about 800,000.

It's always a good walk when you see a brown hare!

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