

Country Notes for July 2026

A couple of days ago, whilst walking my two spaniels in the Meadows Trust, I stood in one of the grass filled meadows and watched swallows, with their lovely forked tails and house martins flying to and fro, feeding on the many small flies and midges that were in the air. The weather forecast promised another rainy day and the birds were flying very low, confirming what the weather forecast predicted. If swallows and martins fly low it is because the insects are flying low, which they do when poor weather is imminent.

I stood transfixed at the sight of these masters of the air as they twisted and turned, almost touching the top the grasses as they did so. It was a wonderful sight and all the more so because of the house martins. Not that many years ago Hollingbourne was full of house martins in the summer but in recent years there have been very few indeed, and often not arriving until mid May. This is partly because of their perilous journey over the Sahara and partly because so many houses these days are designed so tightly for insulation purposes that their nesting sites under the eaves of houses no longer exist. Should your home however have suitable nesting areas for these birds do please make them welcome. They build their nests out of mud which they often collect from puddles and streams and this can end up causing a bit of a mess, but it really is worth it to have the pleasure of watching them as they swoop up to your eaves and back out again building their nests and then feeding their young.

These beautiful birds with their dark blue plumage and very visible white rump really do need all the help we can give them. It's very much a case of welcome them or we lose them altogether. Artificial house martin nests can also be bought and I am going to give this a try next year. I would be honoured to welcome them to my cottage!

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