

Country Notes for September 2026

The last few weeks of summer are upon us, with autumn beginning this year on 22nd September, and it has been quite a remarkable summer. We have experienced a very prolonged dry spell, with little rain all summer and long periods without any rain at all. The country is officially in drought and there have been numerous official heatwaves. This has certainly had a detrimental effect on our gardens and farms, not to mention the wildlife. Birds and animals have been struggling to find water with so many streams dried up and plant life has struggled with parched, rock solid, land.

There is always good and bad however. It has been a good year for butterflies, with large numbers of painted ladys from early on. Meadow browns, gatekeepers and red admirals, to name just a few, have done very well. There was a rare clouded yellow butterfly in Hollingbourne for several weeks and I even had a continental swallowtail in my garden, which was a real first! My garden has witnessed almost daily appearances of hummingbird hawk moths, and I know that I am not the only one. However, bees have really struggled, as they are unable to survive in some of the temperatures we have seen in the past few weeks. There have certainly been fewer and fewer in my garden as time has gone by.

Earlier in the year I wrote about the very few house martins in our villages compared with the large numbers we used to welcome. The good news is that there were definitely more nesting in our villages than there have been for some time. Thank you if you welcomed a nest under your eaves this year and, hopefully, the number will continue to increase next year. There were also good numbers of nightingales nesting in our area.

Let's hope too that, as we move into the last few days of summer and enter autumn, the weather will become more typical for the time of year and that next summer we don't experience such extremes.

Andrew G Snowdon