

## Country Notes for June 2015

The June countryside is awash with sound – and one of the main reasons is that so many birds are in full song – and from so early in the morning! However one of them is missing. For a typical June sound to be completely missing sounds both incredible and unbelievable. However it is true! The sound of the Willow Warbler, once so much part of the spring symphony has been lost to our area for many years now. Other parts of the country can still look forward to hearing their Willow Warblers. In the north, in particular, their presence is as strong as ever.

What has happened? This is a question that many people would like an answer to. Is it climate change – or are there other factors?

Their call is a sweet tumbling scale and it could be heard in all woodland areas until recently. Their appearance is quite honestly rather dull. They are essentially light green in colour with a weak eye stripe and are about the size of a Blue Tit. They are almost the same as a Chiffchaff in appearance apart from the colour of their legs. The legs of a Chiffchaff are blackish whereas the Willow Warbler has pale legs. The big difference is the call – but neither of these distinctions are a problem in our area any more. If you see one – it's a Chiffchaff!

Perhaps they will return. The same thing happened to the Small Tortoiseshell butterfly recently. After a few years' virtual absence from our area they suddenly reappeared and are now a relatively common sight again.

Here's hoping!

Andrew Snowdon