

Country Notes for November 2015

At the time of writing in mid-October the weather is warm and balmy and I've just had a pleasant afternoon in the garden. Although the leaves are falling from the trees there is no sign as yet of colder weather for the foreseeable future. There have been no frosts and our gardens still have lots of summer flowers in bloom.

However, despite the warm weather, the swallows and house martins all left our shores early again this year. In October there are usually a few still flying around and house martins may even be feeding the last of the chicks from their final brood. Does this mean that November will herald a change to colder weather? Did the swallows and house martins know that it was going to be a cold winter and they would be best off back in Africa? We will have to wait and see. Certainly there have been a lot of berries this year - often a sign, so they say, of a cold winter to come.

In the next few days we should start to see the migration of Redwings flying into our country from Scandinavia and Russia. They often migrate by night and call to each other as they do so. One night last year I heard an almost continuous stream of them flying low overhead - more than I have ever heard before.

One creature that it is worth thinking about at the beginning of November is the hedgehog. There has been a massive decline in these lovely creatures over the last few years - so if you are planning a bonfire display and you build the bonfire a few days in advance, do check that none have taken refuge at the base of your bonfire, thinking it a safe place to hibernate for the winter.

Whether it is warm or cold this November do get out, if you can, to enjoy all the autumnal beauty of Hollingbourne.

Andrew Snowdon