

## Country Notes for October 2016

October is a month of real transition in the countryside. We have finally said goodbye to summer, and autumn is upon us, but the weather can often be very benign, with warm days, and evenings when a log fire may be enjoyed to keep off the chill.

An attentive eye and ear will still witness the last of the summer migrants as they linger for perhaps a day or two more. Although Swifts will have long gone, there will still be a few Swallows remaining earlier in the month, and a very few House Martins may stay until the month is nearly out. Chiffchaffs may be heard calling their names in the trees as they did many months earlier in the spring. Butterflies such as Red Admirals, Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells, soon to hibernate in dark sheds and sheltered places, will be making the most of the last rays of sun to stock up with nectar and the juice of fallen fruit in gardens and orchards.

On the ground fungi are evident everywhere, some like the Fly Agaric looking so tempting but actually full of danger and menace if eaten. Towards the end of the month the first of the leaves will be starting to tumble from the trees, shimmering golden and copper in the autumn light.

Alongside these lingering memories of summer, the first of our winter migrants will also be arriving on our shores, especially when the wind turns to the north and a chill hits the air. High above we may see skeins of winter geese such as the White fronted Geese I saw flying above Hollingbourne in October last year. More likely however will be birds such as Fieldfares and Redwings from Scandinavia and Russia. The Fieldfares generally migrate by day and we become aware of their presence as they call 'chuck chuck' flying over. The Redwings however migrate at night and although they are invisible in the dark, on cooler October nights they may often be heard in their hundreds as they make a high pitched almost 'bat like' call flying over, one after the other.

Whether October is mild and sunny, or cold and hinting at the winter to come, there are many pleasures indeed in the countryside in autumn.

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