

Country Notes for February 2018

We are now in the very depths of midwinter and I wonder what the weather will be like. I write this on a warm January day, with sun shining outside my window. It won't last! However, such weather does encourage one to look forward to warmer days with renewed optimism!

When I moved into my current cottage 25 years ago rabbits were frequent visitors to my garden. However, I am afraid that the arrival of a small person with four legs and a meow soon put paid to that. They are not always a farmer's best friend and I see surprisingly few as I walk around the fields of our villages. However, they are definitely there as evidence left behind on the ground will verify! They were apparently introduced by the Romans for food and have been part of the British scenery ever since. The introduction of the cruel disease myxomatosis reduced numbers, but as a species they have survived well.

Hares are a very different animal however, and I seldom see them in our local fields. They are much more upright in appearance and have tell-tale black tips to their ears. They are a native species, can run at great speed and are truly beautiful animals. What a shame, therefore, that some people choose to hunt them down by hare-coursing which, of course, is illegal. Three hares found dead on Eyhorne Green recently had seemingly been hunted by this method and thrown out of a car window as the hunters departed. One had clearly been alive at the time, as the position it was in suggested that it had crawled there to die.

Let's hope that for the rest of this year we and the animals who share our villages can enjoy more peaceful times in this wonderful countryside.

Andrew Snowdon