

Country Notes for September 2018

For some time there has been a pair of Collared Doves in my garden - and they have been devoted to each other. I rarely saw one without the other and they genuinely seemed to enjoy each other's company, perching on the fence or flying around together. It was with some sadness therefore that I recently found the body of one of them on the road near my cottage. The remaining bird seems very sad without its friend and I feel very sorry for it whenever I see it. I know that the sound of Collared Doves can be quite dreary and many of us have had to put up with it quite a lot recently with windows open in the early morning as a result of the heat wave! However I do hope that it finds a new friend very soon!

Collared Doves are not native to these shores. The first one to be seen in Britain was in the 1950s but they spread rapidly and are now a common sight. They are essentially a greyish pink with a black ring around the neck.

The most common of the pigeon and dove family is the Wood Pigeon, a bird that is often not very popular with farmers and gardeners! They are essentially various shades of grey, black and pink, but the distinctive features are a significant white wing bar in flight and a white ring around the neck. The other pigeon likely to be seen in our area is the Stock Dove. These birds are also essentially grey and the distinctive feature is that in flight their grey wings are edged all round with black. Unlike the Wood Pigeon they have no wing bar. Recently I have seen quite a few foraging in the fields of the Hollingbourne Meadows Trust, which has been good to see.

Turtle Doves are summer visitors and have become very rare in recent years. The habitats of Hollingbourne have never really been suitable for them as they prefer marsh and reedland. Their distinctive feature is that their call is similar to the purr of a cat! In appearance they are similar to a Collared Dove but with more markings on their body and wings.

The only pigeon that may be seen in Kent is the Feral Pigeon. This is essentially the domesticated version of the Rock Dove, found in some coastal regions in the west of Britain. However many have inter-bred with Feral Pigeons and pure strains of Rock Doves can be hard to find. Feral Pigeons are essentially 'London Pigeons' and come in a variety of colours!

As summer drifts into autumn there will be much else to enjoy in the fields, gardens and woodlands of our villages.

Andrew Snowdon