

## Country Notes for September 2020

September is the month when summer slips gently into autumn – or at least one hopes it does. As I sit writing this in mid-August, with the temperature routinely well over 30 degrees Celsius, this seems quite a pleasant thought. Many years it feels like summer way beyond the official beginning of autumn, which this year is 22 September. However, one imagines that the temperature will be less extreme than we have been experiencing recently. I would think that many people will certainly hope so!

September is the month when the harvest seems to be at its very height in our hedgerows and woods. Some plants have been in fruit since July. The rowan is one such tree, with its wonderful orange berries. There were certainly plenty of blackberries in August this year, tempting both wildlife and people to pluck a fruit or two from the hedgerow. However, this is the month when the bulk of our plants produce their harvest. We should certainly start to see the first of the haws reddening up on the hawthorns, and damsons and sloes should be in plentiful supply. The majority of people will leave most of these for our wildlife, although they may all be usefully utilised for pie filling, sauces or jams in one way or the other. They most certainly were during the six years of the Second World War, when any extra bounty supplied by nature was much appreciated. Crab apples, together with many of our orchard apples, will also begin to drop any harvest that has not been picked. Those that do drop to the ground will be eagerly enjoyed by bees, wasps and some of our most beautiful butterflies such as red admirals and small tortoiseshells.

Some of nature's harvest, such as horse and sweet chestnuts and acorns from our oak trees, will wait for fruition until October and beyond, and will be much appreciated by squirrels and mice as they prepare for the long winter ahead. For these, however, we and the animals will have to wait just a little longer.

If you do pick from our hedgerows – and who could blame you if you do? – Please remember to leave some for the wildlife to enjoy too. They do not have the option of popping off to the supermarket or village shop!

Andrew G Snowdon