

Country Notes for May 2021

The first day of May is traditionally marked by dancing and partying, as country folk celebrated the end of winter and the beginning of the warm and pleasant weather. There is also a saying that we should 'Ne'er cast a clout till May be out'. As I write this at the beginning of May there is very little chance of any clout casting, as the nights are very cold and the days not much better, despite a lack of rain.

However, some aspects of nature seem to be on time – if not a little ahead. I saw my first swallow flying above my garden on 30th March, whereas last year I did not see one in the village until 15th April. On 27th April there were 2 house martins flying above my garden, but last year I did not see one until 8th May. Even more surprising was the sighting I made of a hummingbird hawk moth in a Bearsted garden on 23rd April. I do not normally expect to see one of these moths, which look so similar to a real hummingbird, until the tail end of summer! This particular moth stayed for some time and was enjoying the nectar on aubrietia and viburnum.

Conversely our trees and shrubs are just bursting into life at the moment, which is about normal. In some years recently they have been several weeks earlier – and last year when we had an early heatwave they were very early indeed. Last year there were some bluebells out at the end of March. This year however they too seem to be flowering when we would expect them to.

There have also been plenty of butterflies to be seen, with especially good numbers of peacocks, brimstones and, more recently, orange tips. One cannot help but wonder what they think of the night-time temperatures at the moment!

Nature has a wonderful way of keeping itself under control, even if some years there are slight changes to normal. We just need to ensure that we do our best to help protect this precious environment for them.

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