

August Village Diary

The August weather has been mixed and the rough winds and sharp showers have damaged delicate blooms and strewn the lawns with torn down leaves.

John Lea writes how he inadvertently scared his favourite waterhen. Having enjoyed a first visit to a restaurant after the long weeks of lockdown, he and Celia arrived home feeling relaxed and cheerful. John decided to share the enjoyment of the day by taking a treat to his favourite waterhen. He went immediately, still dressed for the lunch outing wearing his best jumper of rustic red. He sprinkled some porridge oats on the water and the bird came quickly out of the reeds, took one look at John and fled in panic. He was on his usual electric scooter and wearing his much worn hat but the colour of his sweater had been too like the colour of a fox and his 'woggiehen' had had a nasty shock. Fourteen days later it is still treating John with suspicion despite the fact that he is back in his normal dull-coloured clothing. It peeps out when John calls and scatters porridge on the water but he has to back away before it ventures out to feed. It seems that the fear of fox colour must be built into its genetic makeup as fear of snakes is perhaps built into ours.

John reports that their housemartin numbers have been disappointing this year. After early excited twittering, he was expecting a full house but only three pairs nested. A month later one pair vanished. He has never known a year when only two pairs of housemartins bred on the farm buildings.

John grows a lot of wild flowers, particularly for bumblebees and their numbers seem to be up this year. No doubt the cull of badgers has been much of the cause. Badgers had multiplied tenfold; on his patch the number of bee and wasp nests that they dug out each year was incredible. Now the badger population has reduced the bee population may recover.

Barbara Wilson