

Autumn is progressing nicely as we head into October. We have lots of berries, hips and haws for the birds and the leaves are just starting to turn. We'll soon have those lovely red and golden hues that are so familiar. The blackbirds have just started on the berries on the cotoneaster and the rowan is already stripped so thank goodness for the hawthorns or they'd be nothing left for them when it's really chilly and inaccessible besides our feeders. The sunflower seed feeder has proved particularly popular and we get a good selection of birds on it. It's a relatively simple feeder in that it simply relies on gravity once I've refilled it from the top every day. The nuthatches, of which we now have at least 3 visit us, are very fond of it and do not like sharing their space. The greenfinches are of a similar mind but chaffinches and sparrows don't seem to care whilst the coal tits and blue tits nip on and pinch a seed when the other occupants have their backs turned. I love watching them while I eat my lunch!

On the nut feeders the woodpeckers still dominate and we have an adult pair and at least one youngster visit. The youngster's red cap is starting to disappear and I think it's going to be a male but we'll wait and see where the red markings end up, if it still frequents our feeders as time goes by. As I mentioned, the coal tits have started coming back and we've seen a flock of long tailed tits so the only regular birds we haven't seen back yet are siskins but that's usually later in the year. This year has been very strange though, in many respects.

This is that time of year when the big spiders become visible in the house and unfortunately the chill brings the mice in to look for food. They need to stay outside because I don't want to share a home with them so we have traps set. We've had quite a few already. Outside, lovely - inside, no thank you!

We're going North for a late break this year and I'm hopeful that we might see the Northern Lights. There have been quite a lot of sightings up north but they've been seen from as far south as Portobello beach near Edinburgh. It might be worth looking Northwards from here on a clear night as well as looking for shooting stars as I mentioned in last month's column. Wherever we look from, let's hope it's spectacular.