

SEPTEMBER WILDSIDE

Meteorologically speaking it's now Autumn and it's started feeling like it too. I love Autumn with that wee nip in the air and the days starting, ending, or both, with mist. It's a lovely sight in moonlight especially, although it might bear similarity to a horror film. We are on the way to Hallowe'en after all! I've not had much luck this year with spotting heavenly events and I can only hope that things will be better, mists allowing. This is quite a quiet month but October's going to be busy with the Draconids meteor shower on 7th which is a minor shower with only 10 meteors per hour to the Orionids October 21st/22nd just after midnight, with 20 per hour at its peak and because the waxing moon will set before midnight leaving dark skies, there should be a good display. October ends with the Southern Tauriids on 29th/20th which although 5-10 meteors per hour coincides with a nearly full moon so only the brightest meteors might be seen. This final shower is particularly known for producing fireballs which are larger perhaps 1-2 metres across. Most of these meteor showers are caused by dust particles from comets trapped in orbits around space. To us, they're shooting stars, so get wishing.

Feet back to earth now, and my rowan tree has already had most of its berries eaten so what that tells us about the coming winter I don't know. This is another great year for berries on trees and in hedgerows. A trip to Gala along the A72 shows lots of rowans, hawthorns and the like, positively heaving under the weight of fruit. I've even got a few sloes on my blackthorn bush. Not enough for sloe gin unless I want a miniature. This was going to be the first year I tried making redcurrant jelly but the blackbirds got there first and had a feast so maybe 2021 will be a better year, in many ways.

Some of the autumn/winter visitors to the bird feeders have returned with the coal tit back from the forest now that the breeding season is over and we've even had a couple of siskins which we never normally see back until much later. We have two nuthatches and three woodpeckers, a female and two juveniles, goldfinches, greenfinches and of course great and blue tits but the majority of the birds in the garden especially in the beech hedge is house sparrows and we're now up to nearly fifty so they've had a successful breeding season! The sparrowhawk is now a much more frequent visitor and has tumbled out of the hedge, or sat atop it, with her prize, on several occasions. Many of our swallows and martins have flown south now but there are still a few around. There are still quite a few butterflies around too and lots of, mainly, bumble bees. Both have been enjoying our late buddleia flowers. From their strong sweet smell, you can tell that they're laden with sugary nectar for the insects. I can only take so much of the smell but insects love it or what produces it. Still plenty of bats on the wing too, so there must be lots of nocturnal insects about. Generally nature is starting to change and Autumn is in the air.