

## Nature Watch

**Summer** will fade away this month and on some days we will feel an autumn chill in the air. This should be a reminder that the weather is changing and thick fog can sometimes take us by surprise, especially on our way to work in the morning. In September 2013 there was a severe case of 'motorway madness' on the M6 in Lancashire when more than 200 vehicles crashed in thick fog, leaving 10 dead and more than 70 injured. Drivers have to learn anew each year that chilly calm nights can turn moisture in the air into deadly fog; be warned!



The colours of the countryside are now changing. Beech trees are very noticeable as the leaves are turning yellow; by the end of the month there should be a blaze of bright orange and yellow. The lime tree next to my garden will shed its large leaves that will wither away quickly. Wild cherry trees will add a splash of scarlet to the autumn canvas while the sycamores will add their dull brown-orange as a contrast. Other trees will stay green throughout the month, especially the oaks, which will

begin to shed their acorns later in the month. The horse-chestnut may show that it is being attacked by the caterpillar of leaf-miner moths by the brown blotches on its leaves. This moth was first discovered in south-east Europe in the 1970s and has since spread across the continent. It won't destroy the tree but will affect the leaves. Blue tits help out by eating the caterpillars.



This is the time of year when you look out of your window in the morning and find the garden a shining pool of spiders' webs. The tiny money spiders are at work spinning strands of silk and allowing the wind to take them and drop them down nearby. Other webs are harder to see and that is why we find them entangled in our hair as we walk to the village centre. These are usually the webs of the garden cross spider, so called because of a white cross on its back. They can sometimes be spotted in the centre of the web but most times are hiding in a nearby leaf waiting for the pull of an entrapped fly trying to escape.



A friend phoned me last month to tell me that he had heard a cuckoo on a walk on the outskirts of the village. He was mistaken; the cuckoos have long departed. He probably heard a collared dove, which has a very similar song. The collared dove is a recent immigrant, having arrived here in the 1950s; it has now spread all over the country. They will continue to nest through October and the male will sing its song to warn off other males. These lovely looking birds are welcome visitors to my garden where they will feed on the fallen seeds from the bird

feeder and the black berries of the nearby elderberry bushes.

In my article in the August issue of the **NEWS** I referred to a 'family of partridges'. I am indebted to our reader, Chris Jackson, for pointing out my mistake: a group of partridges is always known as a 'covey'; well spotted (see *Letters to the Editor*). You can't get away with anything with the sharp readers of the Welton **NEWS**.

**Jack Falcon**

