

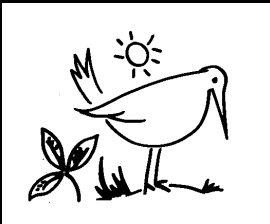
**W**e have now arrived at the time of year that we yearn for in those long, dark days of winter as we hang our water-proofs up to dry. The month of June is full of new growth; wild flowers cheer us with their displays across the meadows, field edges and scrambling amongst the hedgerows and there is literally a buzz from insects to mingle with the aroma of all the different blossoms. Our gardens can be scented too by growing Viburnums and Philadelphus (mock orange). Sow Night Scented Stock and Sweet Rocket in the flower beds but, I'm afraid that if you are not already enjoying the benefits of these you will have to leave it until next year as they need sowing in March-April.

The bird-nesting season is coming to a close as fledglings demand constant sustenance before they take the great adventure into life on their own. The shattered parents will then go into the quiet background to moult and recover from being dutiful parents. Kids- who'd have 'em? It's just the same for them as it is for us humans but, at the end of the day, in spite of the struggles and heartaches, they're worth it, otherwise we wouldn't keep becoming Mums and Dads I suppose!

### Summertime insects

I mentioned earlier the buzz of summertime insects. We are aware of them but tend not to notice them other than to waft them away when they try to join us for a bite of picnic! However, they are all part of the rich pattern of the natural world as

## Country Pie



By Tony Boardman

they too struggle to reproduce. For many they form part of the food chain, for feeding birds for instance, but to us human beings, although we are aware that life is certainly going on all around us, as long as they don't bother us, insects can get on with their own lives.

We admire the bouncing flight of beautiful butterflies during daylight hours and watch the zooming moths after dark. We enjoy hearing the chirp of grasshoppers as they leap out of our path when walking through meadow grass and we admire the Machiavellian spider's web – a gossamer work of art but a deadly trap for unsuspecting small flying insects. We instantly recognise the red and black spotted ladybirds and know that their favourite “grub” happens to be greenfly or aphids which they and their larvae consume voraciously but, apart from the bumblebee and that provider for our tea, the hive bee, we seem generally to be uninterested or ignorant about most of the other creepy crawlies. If you are a gardener it is advisable to know who are your allies and who are foe. A good guide when digging is if you turn up a grub that doesn't move quickly when you disturb it; it's up to no good, lurking in the earth with the intention of sinking its fangs into your root crops. If it 'does a runner' it's harmless. Normally, when you are toiling on your plot, a robin or blackbird will be close at hand to take the proffered morsel. Fast moving black beetles are good, because they will eat slugs but fast, aggressive earwigs, low on the list of popularity with humans, do actually cause damage to

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 plants. They do make wonderful mothers though, looking after their brood like a mother hen – I'm sure the sentimental amongst us will be pleased to know that! You are always likely to come across a lacewing, which is a rather fairy-like insect, pale green with see-through wings and bright golden eyes. Whatever you do don't shun him because their larvae, like the ladybird, feast on the aphids that are such a menace. All summer our gardens and countryside abound with a thriving insect life but because much of what goes on in their world is out of sight in the undergrowth, we are inclined not to investigate.

I'm pleased to report my first sighting of a red kite locally at last, on February 19th. I was driving between Leafield and Finstock and witnessed a single bird being mobbed by a rook over a patch of open country near to adjoining woodland. The large wings, tumbling in the air and the pronounced forked-tail confirmed it all.

Our three bantams, the flighty, startled-looking brown pullet known as Amber



The Robin is always watching for a tasty morsel to be turned up by a gardener's spade

and the identical Light Sussex couple we call the Demented Sisters, still cause us amusement as they rush about the garden. Now that there are insects about, their mad pursuits are increased, and they have earned themselves another accolade, that of 'Formula 1 Chickens', because they seem to go from 0 – 130 mph in seconds! They do blot their copybook at times because of their fondness for scratching up the debris from the flowerbeds onto the lawn, which necessitates regular work with the besom from me and a ticking off from the 'Memsahib'.

Isn't it odd how sometimes we make statements about the obvious? "Isn't it a lovely day today?" we will remark to all and sundry. You can't expect anyone to disagree unless they are feeling slightly liverish when they tell you that in their opinion it is too hot or they don't much like sunshine. Well it's a free country.

Anyway, I had to take the car to Bourton-on-the-Water for its regular service with dear old Bernard Saunders. Coming through the door on my return a voice from the kitchen enquired, "Are you back already?" to which I replied, "I don't know, I'll just find out!"

**Tony Boardman**

### Sign off with a smile

Anita, Sue's Manager, provides this little beauty. John, her father, was watching a recent newscast from a reporter in Abu Dhabi. Mum, Irene emerging from the kitchen only caught part of the conversation; "Ooh, we've been there." An incredulous John replied: "I don't think so Irene, I think you have mixed it up with Aberdovey!"

**Please keep them coming in so that we can all have a chuckle!**

**Please call me on 01993-832898.**