

## Nature Notes October 2011

From time to time people send me wildlife photographs and the most common subject is the Sparrowhawk. Gwyneth and Jim White sent the one alongside this article and it was taken in their garden in Homestead Drive. There are regular reports of Sparrowhawks elsewhere in the village including Butts Hill Crescent, Oaklands, Lime Grove, Ash Grove, Camp Hill, High Street, Church Lane and West End. Their reason for visiting gardens is betrayed by their name. Where people are feeding small birds with seeds and nuts, then it is a good hunting ground for their predators. Speed is the Sparrowhawk's greatest asset, and it seems to come from nowhere to take its prey. Small birds are very aware of the danger and often the alarm call scatters them as the Sparrowhawk arrives. Sometimes it will make a kill, but often it will leave for another good spot it knows of! To give the small birds a fighting chance, it is best to put your feeders close to evergreen shrubs so that they have some cover in which to hide.

At the beginning of August I had a 'phone call from a startled Elizabeth Wheeler who lives in West End. She had been joined in the shower room by a flying bat in the late afternoon. It landed on the floor of the shower where she left it while 'phoning me. She thought that it may have come from the loft as the trap door had come open while she was in the shower room, although she had no idea that the loft was being used as a roost. After she had gathered her courage, she followed the Bat Conservation Trust's advice to put a box over it and then slide a piece of cardboard underneath. When the cardboard reached the bat it made a surprising amount of noise! She then waited until sunset and put the box outside as high as she could, and then gradually pulled the cardboard away. When she returned a little while later, the bat had gone.

Maureen and Stan Clarke from Harpole, sent a photo of a Hummingbird Hawkmoth which they saw around geraniums in their garden. Hummingbird Hawkmoths are active both during the day and at night, but they are most likely to be seen on warm sunny days in a blur of wings making an audible hum. They search for nectar where there are flowers whether it is in the cities or on cliff tops, or in Northamptonshire gardens! They are relatively common, but surprisingly they are migrants from southern Europe and Africa, although they have been known to overwinter here during warm winters.

Now is the time to start feeding the birds in earnest. Even though there is plenty of wild food around, it is best to get the birds used to where they can find food when they are yet desperate. When it is cold they will go to reliable sources of nourishment, rather than taking pot luck on a garden where they haven't found food before. Often people are disappointed that the birds don't come when they start feeding in December or January, but they are probably going next door to their regular haunt.

Send your photographs to [feedback@bugbrookelink.co.uk](mailto:feedback@bugbrookelink.co.uk)