

Boxing Hares & Choirs of Birds – Spring is Here!

Peter Thompson enjoys watching the first signs of spring including boxing Hares and buzzing queen Bumble bees.



Spring is in the air and the Hares are boxing!

Spring seems to be here – as long as you can get out of the keen wind that is!

This weekend I have watched Hares boxing, heard both Woodlark and Skylark in full song, and seen big, buzzing queen Bumble bees crashing about, along with Honey bees and hoverflies nectaring on a stunning pink flowering Daphne bush called “jacqueline postill” – also sometimes called the Nepalese paper plant.

I sound very knowledgeable about garden plants don't I – but in truth I was lucky enough to bump into the gardener while I was watching all this buzzing activity and smelling the delicious sweet scent of this small shrub. He told me the name and also said that it has been in flower for a while – I'm going to buy a couple!

No Butterflies yet, but I know a number of people have seen Brimstone this weekend and it was grand to see mats of yellow Celandine and purple blue violets in flower.

The other lovely spectacle I came across was a large flock of Pied wagtails feeding in amongst a flock of sheep that were finishing off a field of Stubble turnips. I estimated that there were between 80 and a 100 of these Molly dishwashers – a lovely country name for Pied wagtails – catching small insects and sometimes hopping onto the sheep themselves! There were also a few Skylark and Meadow pipit mixed in with them, just for good measure.

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Also, first thing this morning the Fieldfare and Redwing choir gave a wonderful annual rendition. At this time of year, these members of the thrush family which over-winter with us, start to think about returning to their breeding grounds in Scandinavia and Russia. They gather together in large flocks, perching in amongst the top branches of some tall tree and start to practice their songs, fine tuning them so they are on good form when they get back! Often Starlings join them too, resulting in a bubbling, chattering mass of song drifting across the landscape. I stood for some time, listening to this delightful spring chorus, before the dark shape of a Buzzard glided in and terminated proceeding!

What an exciting time of year this is!



Some of the sheep finishing off their winter rations of stubble turnip

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Little Molly Dishwasher - these wagtails seek out farm animals at this time of year, as flies can often be found around them

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