

Sedlescombe and District Garden Society

Newsletter No. 69 – September (2) 2020

Look out for.... **Goldcrest and Firecrest**



Late September and October can be a good time to see these attractive little birds in your garden. The Goldcrest is by far the commoner of the pair, and although Firecrests are still quite rare they are increasing in our area. The Goldcrest has the honour of being Britain's smallest bird. It only weighs about 5g, which is the weight of a 5p coin, with the Firecrest being only marginally bigger. Goldcrests love conifers and will hunt amongst the needles for tiny insects and spiders. Firecrests are often less dependent on conifers, reputedly having a liking for holly and ivy. Both of these tiny birds do indeed have a crest which can be raised during courtship, territory

disputes or when the bird is agitated. Most of the time the crest is flat and appears as a central crown stripe. In the female Goldcrest this is yellow, in the male there is also a small amount of orange. The crest of the Firecrest is orange in both male and female. Distinguishing between these birds is fairly easy given a decent view, as the Firecrest has a prominent white eyebrow, a black stripe through the eye and a fierce expression. It is also a much brighter bird overall.

Unbelievably both these tiny birds migrate and will often cross the North Sea. Autumn frequently sees an influx from Scandinavia and northern Europe, bolstering our resident population. In Oct 2015, I had a Goldcrest in my garden that had been ringed a few weeks earlier in Norway! They will be tempted into our gardens, finding food and shelter in our ornamental conifers, holly trees, and that wonderful wildlife friendly plant - Ivy! In really cold weather they may have a nibble at a fat ball if you provide food in your garden, but on the whole, they are dependent on your dense shrubs, trees and climbers for food and shelter.



September is an ideal time for planning and planting. The soil is still warm enough to help roots establish and there is usually enough rain to ensure plants don't dry out. Perhaps think about what you could add into your garden to increase the food, shelter and nesting opportunities for your garden wildlife. In addition to planting, take time to relax and watch, instead of doing lots of tidying up and cutting back. Wildlife loves some overgrown vegetation, dead seed-heads, untidy corners and a thick climber by a wall or tree!

At the end of the month the bird of our next article, the Redwing, starts to arrive. If you are outside on a clear night in late September or October, listen out for their high-pitched seep-seep call as they fly overhead.

Christine George

Many of you will know that David and Sheila Betts will be moving shortly and we wish them well in their new life. This is significant for the Society because for many, many years they have provided space for us to house tressle tables and chairs and other bits and bobs that cannot be placed at the Village Hall. We now have to move these items by the **end of October**. We do not use these items often but they are sometimes used for other events in the Village. Efforts are being made to find a new permanent home (along with the Theatre Club, who also use the storage) but any long term solution will take some time to organise.

We appeal to any member, with an unused garage or large shed or any other sort of space, to kindly house these items in the shorter term. Contact Brenda (870455, brendampage@icloud.com) or Rod (870983, rodeldridge@lineone.net) if you are able to help.

Something to test your knowledge



Do you know what type of moth and caterpillar these are.

Answers next time

OUR AGM

As you know our AGM was planned for Friday 6th November at 7pm. We had thought that we could go ahead, with limited numbers, but that is now looking less likely. We have the Hall booked for a date in December and we will leave that booking in case there is a possibility of going ahead but we must be prepared for failure yet again.

Our options may be:

1. To abandon the AGM altogether this year
2. To hold it as soon as we can gather, even in small numbers (30 as before) or
3. To hold an AGM on line, which will mean e-mailing the papers, asking appropriate questions and asking members to send in their responses and votes where necessary. This would be useful in regard to the election of the Committee.

Members are asked to say what option they would prefer or to offer any other suggestions by 3rd October please.



What to do in September 2



1. Towards the end of the month plant new perennials as the soil is still warm and moisture levels increasing. Also start planting spring bulbs. If you wish to put hyacinths in bowls for indoor use, handle carefully and wear gloves as they can cause skin irritation.
2. House plants will require less water and some may need to be moved to a sunnier position. Be careful not to leave tropical plants behind a curtain on cold nights which can trap very cold air. Bring indoors any plants that have been spending the summer outdoors but don't bring into a very warm room straight away, a conservatory or greenhouse will acclimatise them and prevent leaf drop. Avoid high nitrogen fertilisers which promote growth, use high potassium fertilisers, such as tomato feed once a month. As your room temperatures rise be sure to keep your house plants moist. Group together, spray, or put on trays of moist gravel and keep away from radiators.
3. Cabbages, kale and sprouts will need continued protection from caterpillars, a fine mesh is better than a spray and pick off any caterpillars you find.
4. Remove old straw and leaves from strawberries as these can harbour pests and diseases. Plant new strawberry plants in fresh ground.
5. If you are buying new plants, try to buy bare root, thus avoiding the need for a plastic pot.

6. Planning a green roof? If planted now the plants have a chance to settle and start establishing before the cold weather sets in.
7. Dahlias – check they are secure against autumn gales, feed once a fortnight to produce good blooms and strong tubers. To save dahlia seeds, cut off yellow seed pods with stems 9 inches long, tie them in a bunch, label and hang upside down in a dry cupboard. Remove the seeds later.
8. Sow parsley and chervil to provide a spring crop, take cuttings of lavender and protect with frame or cloche.
9. Clear away the remains of crops that have finished. Take cuttings of evergreen shrubs, geraniums and hydrangeas.
10. Check gutters and drains are free of leaves and other debris.