

# Blackbird, bye-bye

**I**T SEEMS a very long time since I did my usual column. Six months in fact and it has included some extremes of weather. From the bitterly cold easterlies of March that seemed as if they would go on for ever, to the draining heat of July which I hate more than the cold. The March weather held the tree buds fat and ready to burst, but unable to do so. The daffodils held their buds upright for weeks and at the first warm day they dropped and within a couple of days were beginning to open. The tree buds opened to a wonderful pale yellowish green and the copse opposite was a haze of green against the blue sky. All the flowers opened at once and there was a wonderful week or two when everything was in absolutely riotous growth.

Speaking of spring flowers, the corner at the top of Hollow Lane looked really good this year, with the huge clump of snowdrops on the junction of Hollow Lane and Iffin Lane early, and, much later this year, the primroses the children planted for the Millennium, a large patch of violets at the entrance to the footpath and a smattering of bluebells beginning to establish on each side of Hollow Lane. I have never seen that patch of violets before — I wonder where they could have come from. Many years ago I read that if you plant primroses at the top of a bank where the seed can drop downwards, after a time they will colonise the whole bank. That certainly seems to have worked here as they almost reach the road now.

**I** PERSONALLY have not seen much wildlife, as all through the hot weather I was skulking indoors with a fan, but my husband called me one morning to show me a female kestrel on the lawn. It went shortly afterwards, but later we discovered a pile of feathers where she had been. Had we been a little earlier we could have watched her eat her breakfast.

In March a neighbour in



## My VIEW

By JOAN GOWER

Iffin Lane called to say that there were about 200 field fares taking turns in drinking from puddles in the road, we had seen small flocks in the field opposite, but not that many. One thing I did see several times in April, was the strange bee fly, which has a triangular body and a long proboscis.

**T**HERE HAVE been lots of reports of both spotted and green woodpeckers, also owls, and a definite first for here, a neighbour called one night and said she was certain she could hear a Corncrake in the field opposite. As I was already in bed and reading, to my shame I was too lazy to go out and listen. The neighbour called *The Kentish Gazette* nature correspondent, and was told to ring the RSPB. They came out the next night with a recording of a Corncrake in the hope that if it was still around they would get an answer. The

RSPB said that it was probably resting here on its journey. Wow. A friend in New House Close told me that a collared dove had seen off a magpie in her garden so that it could feed. The same person found a dead collared dove that had been partially eaten, probably by one of the local feral cats and whilst removing the remains she discovered that among the grain and usual food, there was a small ripe tomato. We did not know that they ate these.

**A** BLACKBIRD (it has to be the same one) has started coming into porches, conservatories and even living rooms in the immediate area. I have a fruit and vegetable rack in my back porch and he happily helped himself to my apples. I would not have minded one apple, but he sampled almost all of them, so I have had to put up a net curtain so that he is unable to see the fruit.

**F**INALLY, MANY THANKS to all the people who have bombarded us with offers of help during my husband's spell in K&C and during his recuperation. If I have not taken up your offer, I may yet do so. The sheer volume of cards, phone calls and personal calls was amazing. Particular thanks to Fiona who made a hilarious card of personal interest to Cyril and to all those who signed it. Be very cautious before visiting, however, as any able bodied person that does so is immediately requested to carry watering cans down to the greenhouse for me before coffee is offered. Cyril is now hopefully on the mend and can now drive, so I should not

need any more help there. Thanks a million from both of us.

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Joan

