

Bourne Pandemic 2020 – 19th April 2020

It is strange how quickly we can accept a new reality. We have got used to spending our lives indoors with only the occasional foray to shop for food or take some exercise. The weather has been good, and we have spent a lot of time in our anarchic garden – watching the birds and seeing the frog spawn turn into small tadpoles in the wildlife pond.

We have been visited by a couple of feral pigeons which is very unusual. I wonder if the absence of people and food scraps in the town centre has encouraged them to seek food in outlying house



gardens. They are very confident with a streetwise brashness that enables them to see off the wood pigeons and Jackdaws foraging for seeds underneath the bird feeders.

It has been good to have the time to watch the birds interact with each other in the garden – the swarm of starlings that rush in like a band of unruly teenagers and squabble over the bird feeders. When they all rush off the smaller birds return - blue tits, chaffinches, a robin, and the delightful goldfinches. Sadly, we have lost both colonies

of nesting sparrows we enjoyed in previous years and suspect the recent arrival of neighbours' cats. Life is tough for the small birds. What the cats miss a marauding sparrow hawk will often pick up.

When we do venture out, the streets are eerily quiet, and the few people you see all move quickly. They seem to pursue their exercise with a steely determination, or scurry to shops with a single minded purpose. In lockdown, we seem ashamed to be out even if it is for exercise or essential food purchases. It is as if we cannot be seen to be enjoying the sunshine or having fun listening to the bird song. Public enjoyment seems prohibited in a pandemic.

But people are generally good and patient as the supermarket queues demonstrate. I think most of us have shared the experience of lining up to do our shopping and chatting to our socially distanced neighbours in the queue. We needed some fresh vegetables last week and I had to queue for 20 minutes just to buy a couple of carrots and a cabbage. I was not best pleased, but my mood was lifted by the light-hearted banter of the people around me. Some can be very witty, and humour is infectious. We might not overcome Covid-19 with a humour virus but being able to smile about our situation certainly makes us feel better.

