

Wildlife

to look out for through the year in north Cornwall



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MARCH / APRIL

This is a great time to be out and about when so much wildlife is appearing again after the winter. Many wildflowers will be starting to appear especially in the sheltered areas along the coast and in the hedgerows.

Look out for the butter yellow of the **primrose**, the massed ranks of the **dog violets** amongst the dead **bracken**, the ubiquitous **red campion** and the silvery yellow of the **lesser celandine** at the bottom of hedgerows. Fresh green **scurvy grass**, actually a white flower, and the taller, carrot like **alexanders** begin to make their presence felt, particularly along the coast where they thrive in the salt wind.

below: It is said that the flowers of the **lesser celandine** bloom when swallows return, and fade when they leave.



In the woodlands the first signs of our precious **blue bells** and pungent **ransoms (wild garlic)** will be appearing along with the innocuous **dogs mercury**, splendid lily like **cuckoo pint (lords and ladies)** and many other woodland plants.

Winter hibernating butterflies such as **peacocks, small tortoiseshell, commas** and **brimstones** may be flying on warm sunny days; their wings may be rather tatty and dull in colour after their long winter sleep.



left: There is a popular myth that the **brimstone** gave us the word 'butterfly', a corruption of **butter-coloured fly**.

Mammals become more active as the weather warms up. But you will have to be up and about early to see most of them. If you do make an effort you might be rewarded with a view of **badgers** which are becoming very active. You could be lucky enough to spot a **roe deer** or even a **fox** out hunting. If on the cliffs around Boscastle keep a weather eye open out to sea as **seals** may well pop their heads above water to see what is going on.

Early spring often brings warm sunny days. It's worth watching where you tread if walking on the coast path as you may come across drowsy basking **adders** or **common lizards** trying to summon up energy to go hunting. Adders are rarely a problem for us humans, they'd much rather avoid contact with us.

The end of March should allow you to see the first **swallows** and **sand martins** returning from Africa as they make landfall over the cliffs. **Ravens** will have already set their nests out on the cliffs whilst **dippers** will be flitting up and down the valley streams fossicking for water insects to feed their already emerging young.

MAY / JUNE

"March winds and April showers bring forth May flowers". What a true saying that is for this flowerful area. Everywhere you look in May is a patchwork of brightly coloured flowers.

On the cliff tops the pink of the **thrift**, blue of the **spring squill** and the white of the **sea campion** all come together to form an artist's palette.

Typical of the cliff tops is the yellow and red of **bird's foot trefoil** (often referred to as "**eggs and bacon**"). The soils are quite acidic allowing heathland plants such as **tormentil** and **heath spotted orchids** to flourish. **Sea carrot** and **kidney vetch** have their say, vying for your attention as you tread the paths.

We hope for warm sunshine encouraging the emergence of butterflies along the coast and in the woodland glades. Look out for **orange tips, holly blue, small copper, small pearl bordered fritillary** and **skippers**.

below: **Sea champions** are members of the carnation family.

