



This is just a brief summary of the birds, and some of the beasts, seen in and around the Abbey in the past three years. So far our bird list has reached seventysix for the Abbey and the Abbey Park. This includes four diurnal birds of prey - kestrel, sparrowhawk, buzzard and hobby; all three woodpeckers - great, lesser and green; five species of thrush and five of the tit family; nuthatch and treecreeper; five species of warbler and six species of finch. The kestrels and sparrowhawks seem to be present for most of the year, while the buzzards (three so far) have occurred on passage in spring and autumn. The hobbies are usually present in August and September, sometimes up to three at a time, and are probably hunting for young swallows and house martins over the village, and for the many dragonflies in the Park.

The best birds in 1993 were a nightingale, hopping around the garden on the early date of 15th April and perhaps confused by a very misty sky, and two grey wagtail on the monastery roof during the cold spell in November. A pair of wrens was found locked in one of our caravans - how they got in is still a mystery. They were lucky we found them and could give them their freedom. This year has so far provided a kingfisher, perched over the stream on New Year's Day,

and a male siskin which paid a brief visit to the trees behind the monks' birdtable on 11th January. Other birds seen nearby have included redstart, wheatear short-eared owl and merlin - so it's always worth keeping one's eyes peeled. This applies to dragon flies and butterflies too; there are probably ten or more species of the former in and around the village, and some twentyfive species of butterfly. The butterflies have included a clouded yellow in 1991, a white admiral in 1993 and regular colonies of marbled whites and Essex skippers. Last year was, however, generally very poor for butterflies, with not a single sighting in the Abbey of holly blues or small coppers. Our cat, Lord Mordaunt 11, is also an avid recorder of the local wildlife - particularly small mammals, and has brought in many shrews, woodmice and short-tailed field voles. There is still scope for improvement as the area also has rats, moles, rabbits (including some which are all black), hares, hedgehogs, grey squirrels, weasels, stoats, foxes, badgers, muntjac deer, and possibly Chinese water deer also.

Then, of course, there are the amphibians and reptiles, the bees and the wasps, the plants and fungi, the mosses and the liverworts; more than enough to keep one going for a lifetime!

Br. John Mayhead