

From a Monastery Garden

As I sit in the garden waiting for inspiration, suddenly, it comes, in the form of a distant 'mewing' and, sure enough, a glance to the west produces two Buzzard 'at play' high above the cypresses. They dive at one another, tumble and turn, and then continue to soar effortlessly before repeating the performance once more and soaring to an even greater height. The display finishes with the two birds separating and going into glides which seem to go on forever. The nearer one rewards our patience with a final dip and rise on folded wings and what looks decidedly like a looping of the loop. The date is the 27th July and what we may have been seeing - for Br. Tom has joined me - is time-out for the parents of a brood just over a mile away.

The warm air is also encouraging other birds to indulge themselves. Rooks are passing at a great height and they too suddenly twist and tumble as they return to their rookery nearby. Swallows patrol at rooftop level with Swifts above and a pack of House Martin higher still. I listen for that sudden change in call which may indicate a passing Hobby or Sparrowhawk. If it's a Hobby, and it's above, then the change in call is often accompanied by a frantic rush of wings as the Swifts and hirundines hurtle away from it. If it's a Sparrowhawk they easily rise above it and keep it below until the danger has passed. Both Hobby and Sparrowhawk breed nearby, and the latter near enough for the begging calls of the young to be heard. These are becoming evermore intense as the parents leave them increasingly to their own devices.

Lastly, I listen for the sound of our resident Spotted Flycatcher. We thought that we'd lost them this year but they eventually turned up at the end of June, perhaps after a failed attempt elsewhere. The young fledged yesterday from the same old Swallows' nest as was used last year, and have taken to the garden next door. And so yet another sound so evocative of summer here in Turvey moves on.

Br. John

