

## **Please cut your hedge before March to save our birds**

The Covid lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 gave me the opportunity to work from home. I spent much of it at my computer in the conservatory, looking out at my hedge of holly and ivy and yew. It has given me a new appreciation of the number and variety of little birds using it for cover, for nesting and for food.

With a heightened awareness of climate change there has also been a newly awakened recognition of the benefits that hedges make to the environment (they soak up more CO2 than trees) and provide green highways for our birds and insects to travel along in relative safety. I have learnt that it is an offence under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 to intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built, or to intentionally kill, injure or take chicks or adults, or intentionally take or destroy any eggs. This can often happen unintentionally while trimming your hedges.

I now cut my hedges in the autumn and definitely before the end of January so that I can enjoy the sight of nesting birds each spring in my garden. If I see someone is cutting a hedge during the spring, I speak to them and politely mention the risk to birds' nests, and the laws protecting nests. I think we are all aware of the dramatic decline in bird numbers since the 1950s and we need to do as much as we can to help their numbers recover.

So if your hedge needs a cut, please do it before the birds start nesting.

Chris Howard Member of SG Environment Group (see over for more information from the Environment Group)

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