

## Country Notes for November 2024

On a fine day the countryside in November can be quite glorious, with the colour of the turning leaves and the golden light of an autumnal sun. Having two spaniels I find myself out walking at least twice a day and although it can be difficult to head outside when the weather is really poor, most days it is an absolute pleasure. Bracken and Tilly love every moment of their walks and Tilly gets particularly excited if, as she runs through the undergrowth, she encounters a pheasant. Even at the age of five she is still baffled as to how they can skyrocket upwards and she cannot!

Pheasants are not actually a native species to these isles even though they seem to be such an integral part of it. They were first introduced by the Romans two thousand years ago. The males in particular are beautifully coloured with various shades of blue, red, orange and white. The females on the other hand have plumage in various shades of brown. There are darker forms and occasionally melanistic birds may be seen.

The reason that we see so many is that upwards of twenty million are released each year for the purposes of shooting. Many woods that appear to have been there for ever were actually planted to provide cover for the released birds. Like baby chickens the young can feed themselves almost from birth and learn how to fly very quickly in comparison to other birds.

There are also Lady Amherst Pheasants and Golden Pheasants in some parts of the country that have established viable populations. These probably originally appeared in the wild having escaped from captive collections.

Tilly is less interested in these facts however and is much more excited at the thought that she might encounter another one on her next walk!

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