

Autumn in Paradise 2026 : doom and gloom

After a record hot spell of hot dry weather, we are at last having welcome rain. Silent summer, followed by silent autumn – where are all the birds? Raising young has been difficult!

One thing flourishing is the American invasive alien **Signal Crayfish**. I happened on a party of youngsters, who had trapped several kilos of these animals (they assured me that they had a license for this). Crayfish will eat pretty much anything that comes their way (including their own youngsters) and have colonised the Cam and its tributaries in huge numbers. They are thought to be responsible for some of the turbidity in the river, as they borrow into the river bank for several metres.



Sadly, the pesticides used to treat domestic dogs are serious river pollutants.

Fipronil and Imidacloprid are the chemicals concerned. These “forever” chemicals are banned for outdoor agricultural use in the UK and EU, owing to their persistence and toxicity to non-target species. They pose a very significant risk to aquatic invertebrates such as **Dragonflies and Mayflies, Freshwater Shrimps** etc, with knock-on effects for **Fish**. **Spot-on flea and tick** treatment given monthly has now been discontinued by many vets, on the grounds that continuous prophylactic treatment is unnecessary (“equivalent to having chemotherapy when you don’t have cancer”). When treatment is actually required, they can be given orally. However, many dog owners continue to use monthly spot-on treatment “Just in case”. (If used, dogs should not enter the water for the next 4 weeks, nor be petted by children.) Could this be a reason why huge clouds of **Mayfly** no longer occur in the spring? It sometimes feels as if Paradise is threatened on all sides!



Our new Downy Birch trees have survived the long drought – they still need special care and watering though. Another year before the Queens’ new build is colonised with students.