Spread your wings

Inspired by the birdsong that defined our lockdown spring? Then grab your binoculars, pack your bags and head to some of the world’s great birdwatching hotspots, says Stephen Moss.

One of the very few silver linings of lockdown has been the way the nation has connected with nature. As the sound of spring birdsong displaced the noise and bustle of city life, many people noticed the wildlife around them for the very first time, while in others the passion for all things wild and wonderful was reignited. We have woken to the dawn chorus, fed birds in our gardens, and enjoyed the wildlife to be found in our local parks.

Now that the breeding season is over, though, the volume and intensity of birdsong has sharply declined, while some species, like swifts and cuckoos, are already leaving Britain for Africa. On the other hand, some migrate for the winter, meaning that the intensity of singing will only diminish further as autumn sets in.

It might still be summer, but autumn migration is well and truly under way: on our coasts, wading birds are stopping off to refuel on their journey south from the Arctic; swallows are gathering on telegraph wires, in preparation for their long voyage to South Africa.

So, if you’re beginning to miss your daily nature fix, why not take a leaf out of the birds’ book, and head abroad? One of the best ways is by joining an organised bird tour, with expert leaders and a company with a track record in finding a good range of species with the minimum of fuss.

The operators we recommend are already taking bookings for their 2021 trips and, despite travel restrictions, plenty of countries are still welcoming visitors.

**Costa Rica**, above, will reward with sightings of the toucan, right. **Sunday 9 August 2020**