

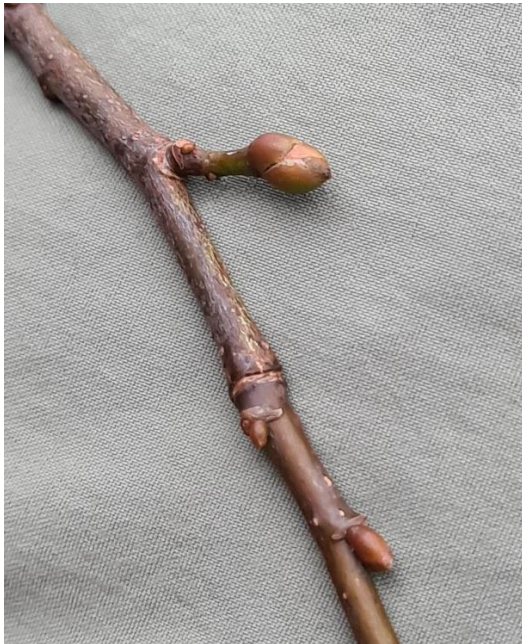
Ryburgh Wildlife Group January Newsletter

Happy New Year. I hope that you had fantastic Christmas period and Father Christmas was good to you. I was very lucky to be given a copy of Nick Acheson's *The Meaning of Geese* book. I'm already about 100 pages in! I was also given a couple of *New Naturalist* books plus the odd murder mystery too. They are next on the reading list.

Just prior to Christmas I bought a newspaper with the hope that I would find the giant festive general knowledge crossword. My family used to take it in turns to answer the clues – I don't think we ever finished though. No special festive puzzles, just the routine sudoku, coffee time crossword and spot the difference! Just in case you too failed to find a festive quiz, I thought I would include one here.

All the pictures below (courtesy of Julie Bunker) are of tree buds or young shoots that we found on a walk around the Bayfield Estate earlier this week. The last one may be a bit trickier, so you've got an added clue in that there is some bark in the picture. Don't worry you don't need to send your answers in on a post card, and there is no prize other than a bit of self-satisfaction that you know your trees.

(a)



(b)



(c)

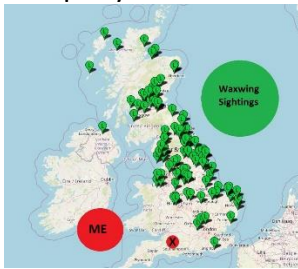


(d)



Last month I wrote about Waxwings, at that stage, not visiting Norfolk. Well how things change. I grabbed this image below from Facebook on 3rd December from someone, not me, who was in Wessex, and hadn't seen any Waxwings and there were already plenty of

sightings in Norfolk. 23 birds were spotted in Fakenham in early December too. Clearly a bumper year.



On the basis that Waxwings move on when they have eaten all the berries from a bush, what do they stock up on for the return journey? Do they leave a few bushes untouched on their arrival ready for the return journey? With Fieldfare, Redwing and Mistle Thrushes around that seems quite a high-risk strategy to me. If anyone knows the answer, please let me know, and can put everyone else out of their misery.

I do not keep a list of all the bird species I see, but walking round different places recently it was lovely to see some old favourites I hadn't seen for a while. Long-Tailed Tits and Goldcrests were buzzing around Bayfield; small groups of finches near Warham, including a solitary Greenfinch; and some fleeting glimpses of a Kingfisher at Cley.

It was fun watching the hierarchy of tits at bird feeders too. At one feeder I saw seven Blue Tits crammed inside a "cage" with a feeder inside – is that a record? At another feeder it was clear to see the order of bravery of species. The bravest were the Blue Tits. They were just happy to sit at the feeder and munch away. Next, were Coal Tits, who didn't come in big numbers but were happy to feed for a while before dashing back to safety. The least brave were the Great Tits. They would fly in bold as brass. Pick one seed or something then dash back to cover to eat it, and then repeat. If we have to name them nowadays perhaps we might have Bold Tits and Cowardly Tits.

There has been some news on about the impact on our rather blurred seasons within some National Trust estates. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-67705812>. I also saw on the BBC News website that a Starling murmuration in Otmoor Oxfordshire was so impressive that the public were asked not to go and visit it as they were causing traffic mayhem. I've been to Otmoor, and there is only one road in. I can imagine the chaos. Talking of bird spectacles, we were lucky enough to visit the Snettisham RSPB reserve at dawn to see the Pink-Footed Geese leave their roost. The geese were impressive, but, dare I say it, the Knot, which were being pushed up the beach by the incoming tide, created an even more impressive sight and sound as they all whirled around and landed a few feet further up the beach.

I can certainly vouch for one seasonal oddity; a solitary Lesser Celandine in flower throughout much of December. We do live in strange times.

Operation Turtle Dove is something to keep an eye out for in 2024. Pensthorpe, the RSPB and Natural England have joined forces to create a partnership to try and reverse the decline in fortunes of Turtle Doves. The Eastern Daily Press reported on this recently stating that 2023 had been a record year in efforts to reverse the declines. The partnership had

worked with 260 farms, and a further 107 land managers to create nesting and feeding grounds across eastern and southern England. It mentioned the Wensum Valley and Brisley in particular, where there were now significant numbers of Turtle Doves. Fingers crossed for Turtle Doves again in our local patch this coming year.

Last but not least, welcome to our newest members: Colin & Vanda, and Kathleen & Philip. Welcome on board.

Dates for your 2024 diary:

The AGM will be held on Friday 2nd February and it will be followed by a quiz. Please make a note in your new diaries to come along. More details to follow after the January committee meeting.

David

Membership Secretary

Quiz answers

<p>(a) Horse Chestnut (b) Beech (c) Ash (d) Hornbeam</p>
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