

Ryburgh Wildlife Group June Newsletter

We are well and truly into the busy Spring breeding season. On the dawn chorus walk last month we had a misty start to the day. A small group of (fool)hardy birdwatchers gathered at 4.00am for a walk round the village hot spots for birds. We started on the old railway line where we had bats whizzing over our heads and then on cue, the birds started to sing. As well as family favourites; blackbirds, song thrush, robin, blue and great tits, we had a good chorus from our summer "little brown job" visitors who'd made it safe back from their wintering grounds. Whitethroat, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Sedge Warbler and Blackcap all contributed to the chorus of song. What was rather strange was hearing both Cuckoo and Tawny Owl within a few minutes each other. We rounded the walk off with a lovely breakfast. Thank you to Ian Wilson for the leading the walk, and to Jane and Mike Rundle for the preparing the breakfast.

Talking of busy breeding season, I've just come back from a week's break in Yorkshire. One of our outings was a trip by train from York to Bempton where we walked up the road to the



RSPB reserve. The cliffs and sea were alive with Guillemots, Razorbills, Gannets, Kittiwakes the odd Puffin or two, and even some Tree Sparrows. A few days earlier the BBC news website had had a picture of a Peregrine carrying a Puffin in its talons. Apparently, the Puffin had somehow managed to escape the to live another day. The picture is not one of those "Ask the Family – what is it photo", it is a Puffin tucked inside a crack in the cliffs pretty much underneath a nesting Kittiwake.

Multi-storey accommodation.

While we were away we also spent some time walking in the Yorkshire Dales. It was almost like being on the North coast of Norfolk. We were surrounded by Oystercatchers, Lapwing and Curlew. We were very lucky to spot four very well camouflaged Curlew chicks wandering through the vegetation being watched over by two very prominent adults. There was one

point when the sky was filled with the evocative calls of Curlews bouncing off the limestone crag and not one bird was in sight. Magical.

At this time of the year, I try and learn a new flower when I go for a walk. One plant that caught my eye recently was Crosswort. It is quite widespread and has rather yellowy green flowers. I didn't have a field guide with me, so I used PlantNet to identify it. PlantNet is a free app for mobile phones that compares a photo of a flower or leaves you take against a database and offers suggested species that match the photo. Sometimes it might give an unfamiliar name to us in the UK but it's a useful tool. I would certainly recommend using it as a tool to identify different plants.



Crosswort, part of the Bedstraw family.

I set aside some time to read the British Wildlife magazines that were starting to pile up. An interesting and thought-provoking article from a member of the BTO was about the costs and benefits of us feeding birds, in other words is it good for birds and wildlife or not. The arguments are too complex for me to summarise for example there were two sets of research assessing the impact of feeding on egg quality and clutch size in Blue Tits. The results from one research was positive, the other negative. It also considered the environmental impact of growing and transporting bird seed produced outside the UK. The article's reference to avian diseases that can be passed on at crowded feeders, was a good reminder to me that we need to clean feeders regularly. One thing was very clear, feeding birds is big business. 2015 research calculated that we, the UK public spent, £175m a year on bird food.

The next event in our calendar is the group's 25th anniversary event. We've had to move our celebratory event to Saturday 1st July 12noon to 4.00pm. More details are in the second attachment in my email. I, and the rest of the committee, look forward to seeing you then to celebrate a quarter of a century.

What will the next 25 years hold? Put your thinking caps on, loosen your imagination and put pen to paper with your ideas for 2048, and send them to me. Let's not leave it to "AI" to tell us.

David

Membership Secretary