

Ryburgh Wildlife Group October Newsletter

I'll let you into a secret. Just before I went on holiday, I was worried I had writers block, and the October's newsletter was going to be more like a October paragraph. Fortunately, while I was away, I found inspiration, although some things below might not seem that appealing to you.

While we were walking the coastal cliff paths the thing that struck me was the sheer number of Red Admirals that were flying. On one small ivy bush in the sun I counted nearly 20 Red Admirals nectaring, basking and gliding about. A couple of Small Whites managed to barge their way in as did a lone Painted Lady. It was an amazing spectacle and several people walking on the path stopped and commented on it. I think the picture managed to capture 17 Red Admirals.



Photo – Julie Bunker

2023 was a good year for Red Admirals as there were announced as the most commonly counted species in this year's Butterfly Conservation's big count. The count recorded improved number of butterflies this year compared to last year, the long-term trend for butterflies remains downward. Even one of our whites, the Green-Veined White, is now a concern as its favoured habitat of damp areas, are shrinking.

Do keep an eye out for the Green-Veined Whites. They have a weak fluttering flight and usually have two broods per year (Spring and Summer) which tend to overlap. This can cause confusion as the different broods have slightly different markings on their wings

Spring brood females have lightly marked upper-wings and heavily marked under-wings. In the Summer brood the upper-wings have darker markings and the under-wings are lightly marked, also the top wings have a marked larger and prominent black wing tips.

Now is the time of the year when the fruits of trees start to litter the ground. I don't think you can beat the magic of opening the prickly outer shell of a conker to find a shiny gleaming brown conker. Near my childhood home we had a Horse Chestnut tree, and my youngest brother and I would inspect all the fallen shells to find what we thought were going to produce the best competition conkers. The world conker championship is still going strong in Northamptonshire. This year it's on Sunday 8th October. I thought conkers was a simple game, but there are now ten rules that govern it!

<https://www.worldconkerchampionships.com/rules.php>



Slugs are another autumn speciality. Sorry I did warn you. I think this slug though gets the size prize. I'm not sure I've seen a slug quite this big before. A predator finding this will be a hearty meal.

Photo – Julie Bunker



The final slug item, honest, was something that we came across while walking in the heathlands of Dorset, close to the Bovington tank training area. Two slugs doing what comes naturally blissfully unaware of what was going on around them including the tank training about 50 feet away.

Photo – Julie Bunker



I kept up my new plant per month with Hemp Agrimony. A fluffy raggedy pink flower, not to be confused with Agrimony. We also managed to spot a Sundew while in Dorset. They can also be seen from the boardwalk at Dersingham bog. It is a very small unobtrusive plant so you will need to look carefully to spot them. It is hard to think that this small plant will capture insects on its sticky buds and then close their leaves to eat their prey.

Photo – Julie Bunker

I cannot keep up with comments about Government weakening environmental protection so I shall skip over this. With a general election looming relatively soon, it will be interesting to see how much the environment will be a matter of focus.



These pictures smack of proud parents (grandparents?) presenting their new arrival. This is the Group's newest bug hotel in situ in Ryburgh. It looks fantastic and is definitely a luxury five-star hotel. Let's hope our local bugs start booking in. If you'd like to make your own small bug hotel for your garden let us know as I'm sure we can give you some practical advice.

Saturday 21st is going to be a busy day for the Group with several things going on and we are looking for volunteers. Please make a note of it in your diary to come along and help.

Between 9.30am and 11.00am we shall be outside the shop in Ryburgh giving away pollinator friendly bulbs. These include winter aconites, snowdrops, grape hyacinth. Do come along and collect some bulbs that you can plant at home or around the village. Not only will you be bringing some Spring colours to the village but importantly, nectar for insects. We also need someone to volunteer to hand out the bulbs. Can you spare a couple of hours? Please me know if you can.

Between 10.30am and 12 noon we also need helpers to do a few things around the community woodland. We need help to plant bulbs; refurbish the existing large bug hotel; and other woodland management tasks, like trimming blackthorn along the paths. Please bring gloves and tools like secateurs and loppers and assemble by the shop for 10.30am.

Our Pollinator Pathway initiative is now making good progress in linking local communities. Stibbard Parish Council is funding their own village event to hand out insect friendly spring bulbs, and in Colkirk, there are activities supported by their Parish Council, that will in time, develop and we hope connect all three villages.

On Saturday 18th November Steve Cale, one of the Group's founding members will be giving an illustrated talk in Ryburgh to celebrate 25 year of the Ryburgh Wildlife Group. Make a note in your diary to come along. More details to follow.

And finally, it's that time of the year again when membership payments are due. Many of you have standing orders in place so it's all taken care of. If you don't have a standing order, I shall be sending a gentle reminder to you. I hope you all decide to renew.

David

Membership Secretary