

## Ryburgh Wildlife Group November Newsletter

As we put the clocks back and say goodbye to October we can start the countdown to the shortest day which, by the time you get this, will be less than 50 days away. I'd like to start with a few thank you's.

Thank you to those of you who sent in October images for the 2026 village calendar. We had a dozen or so entries. You can see them all here <https://ryburgh-wildlife-group.co.uk/galleries/october-2024/> if you think you've sent one and it's not in the gallery let me know. Now it's time for images of wildlife in the village in November. Remember the images can be from prior years but they do need to have been taken in November.

Another thank you goes to John Savory and his family for leading a second walk around the Highfield Farm. Gill Waldron has written a short article about the walk which I've included in the newsletter. Thank you Gill.

I'm not sure what your memories of November are, whether it's the calm before the Christmas storm, or, like me, it's exciting as it's your birthday month or whatever. My abiding memory though of November as a child was walking through piles of fallen leaves and kicking them up the in air. I know there are some piles of leaves around but there seems to be many leaves still on the trees. Are they really taking longer to fall each year or is my mind playing tricks on me?

It may be November but our wildlife is still out there. On the 1<sup>st</sup> November while we were out walking round the Blicking Hall estate, yes kicking up the leaves where I could, we spotted a Hornet going about its business. With binoculars it looked frighteningly large.

While we are on the subject of Blicking Hall, I saw this old Oak tree. It's long tired lowest boughs are now touching the floor and no doubt help keep the tree stable. It would have made a lovely seat for a picnic but it was on the wrong side of the ha-ha.



Photo by Julie Bunker

No autumn newsletter can be without a picture of some fungus. These were tiny, about 5mm in size. No idea of the species, they just looked cute.



Photo by Julie Bunker

It's inevitable but Christmas is coming. If you are stuck for ideas, I can recommend the book called *English Pastoral, An Inheritance*. It is about a farmer from the Lake District and he and his family's connection and reconnection between farming and wildlife.

Christmas came a little earlier for me this year with a family trip to Canada to share Thanksgiving holiday with my brother and his family who live there. We were quite lucky in seeing very noisy Blue Jays and a scarlet red Cardinal. We also saw a few Canada Geese in their native home which felt a little strange. What was also a little strange was seeing Grey Squirrels in the minority compared to Black Squirrels which were very commonplace. A number of what we'd call "our" bird species are found there.

One bird we saw quite commonly while we walked around the islands in Toronto was the Golden-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*). For all and intensive purposes, it was the same as our Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*). These two pictures were also taken on the islands, which were only a ten-minute ferry ride away from the downtown metropolis.



Black Squirrel and Downy Woodpecker – photos by Julie Bunker

## RWG Farm Walk Saturday, October 26<sup>th</sup> from Gill Waldron



Photos by Gill Waldron

Another lovely day for the second walk round Highfield Farm this year, to hear how John Savory and his son Guy, farm for food and conservation. Fourteen members and a guest came, most had been on the first walk. Before we explored another area of the farm we looked at two fields which, in the late spring had been full of an attractive variety of plants such as clovers which had been grown for a combination of soil nourishment and cover, food and pollination for wildlife. This was mown and ploughed into the soil to continue nourishment underground. Ploughing is now a rare activity at Highfield to avoid unnecessary disturbance of the soil and replaced with surface harrowing and sowing into the slice left by the harrow disc. One field had been sown with winter wheat, including several distinct strips trialling different varieties to judge their disease resistance and yield. The second field had been sown with the seed harvested from a bird seed crop sown on field margins last year, which had grown rapidly and was providing grazing for a large flock of greylag geese who took no notice of us at all.

The part of the farm which can be seen from Pensthorpe is really attractive with views over the river and trees turning colour. John's frustration at the squirrels raiding the bird seed containers round the farm continues, he is not alone in finding it impossible to outwit them. We saw some recent sowing of cover crops in fields which will subsequently be sown with spring barley, learnt what a 'scoot' is (the awkwardly shaped angles on fields which hinder efficient tractor movements) and began to understand something of the risks inherent in farming which are ever present and are largely, as with the weather, impossible to influence. To my surprise John explained his view that the biggest risk in farming is hay making – although the grass once sown repeats its crop, haymaking demands a very difficult balance between cutting it at the right time (too early, it rots, too late it turns to dust) and then having at least 4 or 5 days dry weather so it can dry on the ground before it is baled.

Most of us felt that we had begun to appreciate the problems and to some extent, the rewards of farming in this way. John explained things patiently and clearly to those of us who have no farming background and Guy was always happy to correct him when he got the numbers and dates wrong as well as being his wingman throughout. Walking back to the cars we detoured to see another reclaimed pond with a healthy crop of bullrushes. A lovely morning.

### **Dates for your diary**

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 10.30am - Local history walk** – led by Peter Trent.

Meet at the village hall in Great Ryburgh. Please let Gill Waldron know if you'd like to join this walk.

**2025 - Winter celebration for 10 years of the community woodland.** This is planned to be on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> January. Details to follow.

**May 2025 – Big River Watch** and water quality testing. Details to follow.

### **Tail piece**

We admire the silent flight of Owls something they have evolved over many years. This got me thinking about Pheasants and Wood Pigeons, both birds that are regularly shot. How long will it take evolution for them to be able to break cover without making any noise?

**David**

Membership Secretary