

Ryburgh Wildlife Group

December 2024 Newsletter

Let me start by thanking all of you who have renewed your membership. Membership and membership subs are vital to the ongoing success of the Group. Thank you. I'd also like to welcome new members Abbie and Clare. I hope you enjoy your time in the group.

Local history walk. Recap and thank you to Peter Trent by Mike Rundle

An important part of the history of any village is to be found in its church. Peter Trent has researched that history and found a great deal, a small proportion of which that he kindly shared with some 15 of us on Saturday 23rd November. And what a fascinating story he told over a generous three hours, touching on the structure of the church, the origin of the windows and decoration and above all about the families that dominated and left their mark. He brought it all alive. We all left the walk feeling the connection between the history and ourselves as the current residents.

Peter has put a great deal of information about the history of the village on the church website - <https://www.standrewsgreatryburgh.org.uk/>

Mike Rundle


I recently bought a copy of Birds of Norfolk that was published in 1999, and I thought this would be a good yard stick to see how our bird life has changed. The book talked about climate change and the possibility of Cetti's Warbler increasing its then toehold in the county, and more exotic species like Common Rosefinch and Penduline Tit joining the ranks of Norfolk birds.

Cetti's Warblers have definitely "arrived" and can be heard in Great Ryburgh. Other new species that have "arrived" in Norfolk are the Egret family – Little; Great White and Cattle. The book records that throughout the 1990s these species were, "rare vagrant", "scarce winter visitor increasingly staying for long periods", or "very rare vagrant". Nowadays on a good day, all three species can be seen from the bridge over the River Wensum in Great Ryburgh.

If you do a Google search (other search engines are available) on "differences between egrets" this is part of what you get back – thank you Google and AI. Another useful place to search is the RSPB website <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife>



Little egret

A slim egret with a black bill and long white head plumes. They are common in UK wetlands and are often seen walking through shallows to catch fish. 




Great egret

A large, all-white egret with a yellow bill and black feet. They have long legs, long toes, and long curved necks. 



Cattle egret

A small, compact egret with a short, yellow bill and yellowish legs. They are often found away from water, feeding on insects and other small animals that they disturb in fields of livestock. 

I'm sure you've all seen pictures of Cattle Egrets standing on the back of cattle. Well, I'd like to put forward a new name for the humble Starling. I'd like to call it Swine Egret. Recently in a pig field near Warham there were several individuals standing and feeding on the back of the pigs. As it seemed a little unusual, I spent some time admiring the Starlings in their spotty winter plumage, not something I'd really done before as I just took Starlings for granted. Next time you see a Starling in your garden take a longer look and enjoy their spotty winter plumage.

Talking of taking things for granted, I recently looked out of a window and saw a tit quickly arrive and leave our garden feeder. I didn't get a good look so I just assumed it was a skittish Great Tit. The same happened a few minutes later the same again. Not to be outdone, I waited patiently at the window and was soon rewarded with a lovely view of a Coal Tit. Definitely not a regular visitor for us and not to be taken for granted.

A little while ago the committee agreed that the Group's website was a bit out of date and needed a spruce up. We are trying to make it a more living website and be more valuable to people especially those new to the area. I've been looking at this with our webmaster and a number of changes have already been made and there's more to come. Do go and have a look and see what you think. <https://ryburgh-wildlife-group.co.uk/>. Any comments, good or bad do please let me know.

You may remember we recently had a successful woodland walk in the Sennowe estate. We couldn't tell you at the time as the announcement was embargoed, but Tom Cook and the Sennowe estate have won the Duke of Cornwall's Silver Award for Resilient Multi-Purpose Forestry. Well done Tom on winning such a prestigious award. Click on the link to read more about the award. <https://rfs.org.uk/news-list/duke-of-cornwalls-award-2024/>

Gentle reminder for wildlife pictures for the 2026 village wildlife calendar. Do keep them coming. I know of several people who've got some interesting photos. Please do send them in to info.ryburghwildlife@gmail.com.

Dates for your diary

Pond Restoration – scrub clearance

The Sennowe estate has given the Group permission to restore a pond near the old railway line. Mike Rundle is planning to hold two work mornings to start removing scrub from the pond's surrounds. We need up to six people to volunteer for these two initial work parties. Are you able to help?

The dates are **Saturday 14th December and Saturday 11th January** - working from 10.00am to 12.30pm. Assemble at Mike's house at 9.30am.

Please bring your own strong gloves and tools capable of clearing scrub. The Group's insurance does not cover the use of tools, so people attending must take all necessary care to ensure their own safety and the safety of others working nearby (from his/her work) because it will remain your personal responsibility.

If you would like to help and do your bit for local wildlife, please contact Mike either by phone 07876588823 or by email mike_rundle@iCloud.com.

Saturday 18th January - celebration for 10 years of the community woodland

On this date different groups from within the village will be working together to celebrate ten years of the community woodland in the form of a Wassail that will be led by Holt Ridge Morris.

The event starts at the Memorial Hall at 3.00pm. Holt Ridge Morris will lead a procession to the community woodland where the Wassail will bless the fruit trees in particular before processing back to the Memorial Hall. After the Wassail Holt Ridge Morris will perform some dances to entertain you. The community "Pop-Up-Pub" will be there too to help quench your thirst.

Do come and join us in a centuries old tradition and to help encourage a good fruit summer crop in 2025. It should be an enjoyable afternoon.

What is a Wassail? Wassailing is a post-Christmas tradition that has been practised by communities in Britain for centuries. Its purpose is to drive away evil spirits and encourage good spirits into ensuring a good fruit harvest the following season. It takes place in early January and involves a visit to an orchard for singing, dancing, drinking and general merrymaking.

Historically, wassailing took many different forms. One form of the wassailing tradition involved groups of revellers going from house to house to drink toasts and wish good health for the year ahead on the dwellers within. The word 'wassail' is believed to be derived from the Old English 'was hál', meaning 'be hale' or 'good health'. The response to the cry "wassail!" is "drinc hael" which means "I drink to your health".

Nowadays a wassail involves a procession to an orchard or fruit trees (usually pear or apple) to sing songs, bang pots and pans to make a noise to scare away bad spirits and then bless the trees to encourage a good fruit crop by hanging toast soaked in cider on their branches.

In the English folk world there are two quite well-known wassailing songs: 'The Gloucestershire Wassail Song', '*Wassail! Wassail, all over the town, our toast it is white and our ale it is brown...*', and 'The Wassailer's Carol' ('*Here we come a-Wassailing among the leaves so green*'). Both songs are widely recorded. The version of the Gloucestershire below is by The Longest Johns.

https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=gloucester+wassail&sca_esv=2fef05e0321082e1&sxsrf=ADLYWIIWqOQohiFcv9E-yDErf1edzAY_cw%3A1731245088394&source=hp&ei=ILQwZ4vDFfKxhbIPnYi68AM&iflsig=AL9hbdgAAAAAZzDCMKbZZL9diPsgYPPW0bGeTUdjYmz_&gs_ssp=eJzj4tFP1zcsNjDNTi6JrzBg9BJKz8kvTU4tLkktUihPLC5OzMwBAMDvC9w&oq=gloucester+wass&gs_lp=Egdnd3Mtd2l6lg9nbG91Y2VzdGVyIHdhc3MqAggAMgUQLhiABDIFEAAyGAQyBRAAGIAEMgUQABiABDIIEAAyFhgKGB4yBhAAGBYHjIGEAAyFhgeMgYQABgWGB4yBhAAGBYHjIGEAAyFhgeSKREUABYrSRwAnAkAEAmAF6oAHdDKoBBDEExLja4AQHIAQD4AQGYAhOgArQNwgIKECMYgAQYJxiKBclCChAuGIAEGCcYigXCAgoQABiABBhDGIoFwglQEAAyGAQYsQMYQxiDARiKBcICERAUgIAEGLEDGNEDGIMBGMcBwgILEAAyGAQYsQMYgwHCAggQABiABBixA8ICCxAAGIAEGJECGIoFwglVEAAyGAQYsQMYQxiDARiKBRhGGPkbWgIMEAAyGAQYQxiKBRgKwgINEAAyGAQYsQMYQxiKBcICDhAAGIAEGLEDGIMBGIoFwglKEAAyGAQYsQMYCsICBxAAGIAEGArCAg0QLhiABBixAxjUAhgKwgINEC4YgAQYsQMYQxiKBcICEBAuGIAEGLEDGEMygwEYigXCAg4QLhiABBixAxjHARivAcICDhAuGIAEGLEDGNEDGMcBwgILEC4YgAQYsQMYgwHCAg4QLhiABBixAxjDARjUAsICDhAuGIAEGMcBGI4FGK8BwgILEC4YgAQYxwEYrwHCAhAQLhiABBixAxjDARiKBRgKmAAMakgcEOS4xMKAHuOYB&scIent=gws-wiz#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:159556c9,vid:SiBsoMh03SA,st:0

Wednesday 19th February – AGM and quiz

More details will follow. The committee can have nine members. If you would like to join the committee, please let me know. You do not have to be a wildlife expert.

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

Ryburgh Nature Watch – dates and details to be decided

Reasons for Hope

Not that local to us but I thought little clip which made the BBC news website was a reason for hope. Works begin to restore ecosystem of St Albans rare chalk stream the river Ver. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c8ekzrnd5p3o>. By my reckoning that just leaves another 199 chalk streams or rivers to restored.

David

Membership Secretary