

Ryburgh Wildlife Group January & February 2025 Newsletter

Christmas is all but done. The Yule log should just about have burned its last and Epiphany is just around the corner. The fog has lifted, the sun has made an appearance, and we've had snow. Welcome to 2025.

You may have noticed that this is a newsletter for January and February. At the time I would normally be writing the February newsletter I shall be on holiday in the southern hemisphere. I've not been south of the equator before, and I am keen to watch the water go down the plug hole the other way.

We may be past Christmas but the season for giving presents isn't over. The hedgehog group that Colin and Vanda, two of our members are involved in, is always looking for newspapers to line hedgehog hutches. If you have a stack of old newspapers Colin and Vanda are willing to collect, or if you are travelling through Colkirk, please leave them in the porch of Riverhead Cottage at the top of Hall Lane. NR21 7NE.

The Group also received a lovely present recently. Martin Turner at Fakenham Garden Centre very kindly donated 100 x 8ft bamboo canes to support further bug hotel building as part of the Pollinator Pathway project. Thank you very much Martin, much appreciated. Are there any volunteers who can offer some time to help make some bug hotel? Do let me know.

During December a small band of volunteers assembled for a working party to start the restoration of the pond by the old railway line. A great deal of material was cleared to allow light to reach the pond. Already there has been a remarkable transformation. We have one further working party on 11th January, do come along – details below, after which we will wait and see how the pond responds and develops this year. Below are a couple of images from the day.



Photos by Mike Rundle and Clive Elliston

In the last newsletter I included a link to a BBC clip about chalk stream restoration in Hertfordshire. The good news is that the initiative to improve chalk streams is alive and kicking in our local area too. This is a link to the Norfolk Wildlife Trust's page all about saving chalk streams, notably the River Wensum is the longest, biggest and most significant in Norfolk.

https://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/save-our-chalk-streams?utm_source=Members+e-newsletter+Dec+2024&utm_campaign=66a68da6da-DECEMBER_2024_MEMBERS-ENEWS&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-913d5e3e48-299539095

On the subject of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, a number of us on the Group's committee met with some key figures from the Wildlife Trust to discuss how both organisations can support and help each other. The Wildlife Trust were genuinely excited that we had initiated the meeting to talk about our ideas. They too have some interesting plans for 2025 which are still under wraps. We are planning a follow up session in early January after which we may have something more concrete to share, but as BT used to say, "it's good to talk".

Gentle reminder for wildlife pictures for the 2026 village wildlife calendar. Do keep them coming to info.ryburghwildlife@gmail.com. If you've got some you've taken a while ago, please do send them in. The two images below don't count – not local – but I just liked them. I hope you do too.

I found this ivy "tree" or "mushroom" while I was walking in the Chilterns. It just appealed to me. All I need is to find a picture of a Holly tree!



Photo by David Cooling

Some time ago I mentioned about a bird exhibition at the Natural History Museum. I managed to visit it before it closed. I thought it was very interesting and two things I learnt were: (1) Jays have an ability to paralyse worms so that they can come back and eat them later (*seems a bit risky to me, you never know who or what is looking for a free, and pre-captured meal*); and (2) Great Tits in Hungary have learnt to eat the brains of hibernating pipistrelle bats. Such sweet little birds too!

During the lull in festivities between Christmas and New Year Julie and I went to Anglesey Abbey in Cambridgeshire. In the grounds we found this very unlucky tree. It has been hit twice by lightning in the past few years. It sort of reminds me of a bishop's mitre. The National Trust assures us that a Treecreeper often nests in the crevices of the bark.



Photo by Julie Bunker

Dates for your diary

Pond Restoration – scrub clearance – Saturday 11th January

Working from 10.00am to 12.30pm. Assemble at Mike's house at 9.30am.

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.

More details can be found at <https://ryburgh-wildlife-group.co.uk/events/>.

24-26th January – RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch

The Big Garden Birdwatch is the UK's largest annual citizen science wildlife survey. The RSPB says that last year over 600,000 people counted 9.7 million birds. Wow. The link below has more details if you are interested in taking part this year.

https://www.rspb.org.uk/whats-happening/big-garden-birdwatch?sourcecode=bwmith0230&utm_source=googleads&utm_medium=paid-search&utm_campaign=bgbw-2025&utm_content=ppc&gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQiAyc67BhDSARIsAM95QztNine_gQI46jyKlI2YA9J-Uu_bnhfc39OVeP2fyM-Lc8L_5eBCfpwaAijwEALw_wcB&gclid=aw.ds

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 don't 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

Things to look out for in the coming weeks

Besides Snowdrops you might find some plants and trees will be in flower. These two images are from Anglesey Abbey and are Wych Hazel and a Viburnum.



Photos by Julie Bunker

If we have a warmer sunny day, you might be lucky to see a butterfly, like a Peacock or Small Tortoiseshell, or even a bumblebee. Send me details of what you've seen and I will share with the Group.

I leave you with something that is completely un-related to wildlife and Norfolk, but I thought the picture below might jog a few memories. Do you the television programme, the Hammer House of Horror? Well, this is it. Hampden House at Great Hampden in the Chilterns.



Photo by Julie Bunker

David
Membership Secretary