

## Ryburgh Wildlife Group

### September 2025 Newsletter

I am writing this newsletter and it is raining; a bit of novel experience. We humans are fickle beasts and I suspect the novelty of rain will very soon wear off.

1st September marks the start of the meteorological autumn. Later in the month we will have the autumn equinox, start of the astronomical autumn, after which the nights will be longer than the days. Someone shared a message with me that said will not have an 8pm sunset now until April next year. As well as the start of autumn, it is the start of the new "storm season". Over 50,000 suggested names were sent to the Met Office. Below are the chosen names for the year. According to the Met Office, Dave was suggested by its nominator in recognition of their beloved husband who can snore three times louder than any storm. In the storm year starting 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024, we had six named storms. I how wonder many we will have this year.



From BBC website.

There has been talk about whether autumn has come early. I heard Chris Packham being interviewed on BBC R4 this morning (1<sup>st</sup>) and he highlighted this issue of early autumn and the impact it might have on wildlife. I certainly felt that halfway through August the countryside changed. Someone had flicked a switch. The colour had been drained away and the bees and butterflies vanished almost overnight save for the ever-present white butterflies.

I met the Butterfly Conservation's Norfolk branch transect coordinator recently and he showed me some of the transect data across the county. Until the middle of the month there were lots of butterflies being recorded and then pretty much only the whites were being recorded.

This sudden drop off might be because everything started so much earlier this year and so things ended early too. Some other exciting news on the butterfly front is the first ever sightings of Southern Small White butterflies in the UK which made the national press. One

sighting was in Suffolk the other Cleveland.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/aug/08/uk-butterfly-species-southern-small-white>.

Closer to home we have had sightings of Marbled White butterflies on the Suffolk / Norfolk border. This species is not yet found in Norfolk, but who knows what 2026 or 2027 might hold. It would be fantastic to see these butterflies flying in the county. They are not part of white family. They are part of the brown butterfly family that includes like Ringlet, Meadow Browns, Gatekeepers and Speckled Woods amongst others.



Marbled White. Photos by Iain Leach

It not just butterflies that are expanding their range. The Norfolk Hawker dragonfly is spreading out from Norfolk. It is a distinctive brown dragonfly that has green eyes. A few weeks ago I was at an old chalk pit on the Hertfordshire / Buckinghamshire border that is now a nature reserve, and a chap was there with a camera trying to get a picture of a Norfolk Hawker that had been seen there. Norfolk Hawkers have also been seen in Leicestershire this year.

I referred to the term “transect” above in relation to butterfly recording. This may be unfamiliar to you so here’s my potted explanation. There is much more information on the United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) website <https://ukbms.org/>. This scheme began in 1976 and one of the world’s longest running insect monitoring schemes. The scheme has created a large dataset of information is used for scientific analysis, statistical reporting and help determine conservation activities. There are over 2,000 transects in the UK and over 70 across Norfolk. In summary a transect is a prescribed scientific method to count butterflies over a specific route, typically 1-2km in length. Ideally transects are walked and butterflies counted at least once a week from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September. The person recording butterflies must capture weather details such as wind and cloud cover, as well as the number of butterflies seen. Only butterflies that are seen within 2.5m distance either side of the route are counted. It sounds daunting but it isn’t really, and it does provide valuable data about the status of butterflies. If you are interested in creating a transect in Ryburgh area do let me know and I can put you in contact with the appropriate person.

Last month I mentioned about bird tunes folk music by Miranda Rutter. Well, I and a packed church in Sidmouth, saw her, along with Sam Sweeney and Rob Harbron, perform this live. It was quite mesmerising. Miranda explained about how she went about recording the bird song and how she tried to match or mimic it. One species she recorded was singing in the key of F# major – very obscure. I do recommend getting a copy of the CD or maybe put it on your Santa list. <https://mirandarutter.com/album/2808980/bird-tunes>.

Have you been watching the new David Attenborough series, Parenthood? I've only seen a couple of them, but it is truly fascinating to see the efforts animals and birds go to in the rearing of their offspring. I liked the bit when a juvenile monkey didn't like their bed and so climbed up the tree to have a cuddle with its mother in her tree-top bed. Wonderful. I also like the Potter Wasp too.

During August the group had two events. The first was organised by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) to show people the wildlife projects that we have been undertaken in and around the village. This is a short account of the walk from our Chair, Mike Rundle.

*There were attendees from four other regions, invited by NWT to learn what we as a group have been up to. It was lovely to see Tom Cook came along for the visit to the community woodland. We also visited the zombie pond and the scrape. Everyone was very impressed and Gemma from NWT promised to send links about pond restoration recording and to youths in our area who have expressed interest in ecology. One link that Gemma has sent is about [Operation Turtle Dove](#) which is looking to improve the fortunes of Turtle Doves.*

*Gemma has also added that she just wanted to say a huge thank you to the group for leading the wonderful guided walk. Denzil and I absolutely loved seeing all the projects you have been working on in Great Ryburgh, what a fantastic place.*

The second event was a visit to Warham Camp on Bank Holiday Sunday. This is an Iron Age camp and is the only remaining visible camp in the county. Some Roman artefacts have been found on the site but despite recent digs very little else has been found. We learnt that a local landowner many years destroyed part of the camp to enable them to realign the River Stiffkey. The Norfolk Rivers Trust has recently worked on restoring the river to its original more meandering course. This year there have been some problems with early grazing on the site and so there were very few wildflowers on show and only one or two Chalkhill Blue butterflies. On the other hand, the adjacent field, to which there is no public access, was filled with flowers and hopefully is a reservoir for butterflies for 2026.

The pictures below are of Carline Thistles and a female Chalkhill Blue that we managed to spot at Warham Camp. We did see a few Knapweeds and Harebells too. Carline Thistles look dead even when they are in flower. They are often found in short and unimproved grassland on poor soils including chalk. The female Chalkhill Blue picture isn't the best photo but it does clearly show the white outer rim with the black lines crossing it.



Chalkhill Blue. Photo by Julie Bunker



Carline Thistle. Photo by David Cooling

A project the Wildlife Group is focusing on currently is the identification and mapping of trees in the area, especially old trees, and ones that have special meaning or significance to people. The committee is still working out the best way to capture the information about your special tree so watch this space. One person has already shared their favourite Oak tree below, thank you Fenella.



Picture by Fenella Purdy.

I'm sure many of you would also say that Oak trees are your favourite. Putting to one side the North America Red Oaks that are planted for recreational or ornamental purposes, there are generally four species of Oak found in Britain, but only two are native species. The native species are Common or, Pedunculate, Oak and Sessile Oak. Pedunculate Oaks prefers heavy soils and are dominant in the south, east and central England. Sessile Oaks fare better on poorer soils and are prominent in the west of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland.

These Oak species are similar and can, and do, hybridise, but there are some simple tips to identify the different species. Pedunculate Oaks have acorns that are attached to the tree by a long stalk, but the leaves have a short stalk. Sessile Oak on the other hand have acorns that are directly attached to the tree, ie without a stalk, but their leaves have a longer stalk compared to Pedunculate leaves.



Pedunculate Oak. Photo by David Cooling

The other species often see are Turkey Oak, which has very narrow leaves and has a hairy acorn cup, and Holm Oak, an evergreen tree that has glossy oval leaves and very small acorns and is often found in coastal areas.



Holm Oak. Photo by David Cooling

### **Dates and events for your diary**

**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> October** – 10.30am walk in Sennowe estate to admire some old trees. To register for this event please contact Gill Waldron by email at [info.ryburghwildlife@gmail.com](mailto:info.ryburghwildlife@gmail.com) . Please note that this is the morning after the clocks will have gone back.

### **Tail Piece**

We have created a WhatApps group for RWG Members so that we can share news quickly with each other. A few members have joined the group. If you haven't joined yet and would like to please let me know.

**David**

Membership Secretary