

Ryburgh Wildlife Group “No Mow” May 2026 Newsletter

A new month and the snow-capped hedgerows have been replaced by creamy white blossom of hawthorn but can just because the Hawthorn is in flower can you “cast your clout” yet or does one have to wait until the month of May is over. I’m sure the person(s) that created that piece of folklore knew what they meant but they didn’t share it with Wikipedia.

Another piece of folklore revolves around the Cuckoo. “The cuckoo comes in April, she sings her song in May, in June she changes her tune, in July she must fly, in August she must.” Well we heard a close-by Cuckoo while we walking around Sennowe last week. They’ve also been heard in the village and I heard one in the Highlands of Scotland near Glenfinnan. Watch out little birds. One or two of you are going to have an oversized chick to feed very soon.

While walking around Sennowe we talked about the differing success of Cuckoo throughout the UK. It’s been noted that different populations of Cuckoos within the UK take differing migration routes. The more successful route is via Italy and France rather than via Spain. If you take the Italy route, a strong easterly wind will still deposit you on land, whereas a strongly easterly on the Spain route won’t.

Over 15 of us had a lovely and informative walk round parts of Sennowe guided by Tom Cook. As ever we learnt a number of interesting things from Tom about woodland management. We know now that a tree with a white spot is doomed; just waiting to be felled by the next person to pass by with a chainsaw. Tom also showed us a grove of Beech trees that have been affected by a WW II bomb that exploded nearby. The trees in this grove have bits of shrapnel embedded within them, and therefore are useless for timber. The shrapnel would also ruin any sawmill blade. To look at the trees you wouldn’t really know that had a hidden secret.



Shrapnel damaged Beech tree. Photo by David Cooling

We saw some lovely Beech tree flowers on the Sennowe walk; I think we all tend to overlook tree flowers. I’ve seen Ash and Oak both in flower but no idea whether we are going to have a “splash” or a “dash”. Yet another countryside folklore. While we were in

the Highlands we managed to capture the moment where the black tipped buds of an Ash tree were just about to explode into flower.



Ash buds – Tongue. Photo By David Cooling.

Not far from where I took this picture we came across an unusual looking fungus. You may have read my notes in the Upper Wensum Diary about the names of organisms. Well this one was definitely a Ronseal fungus, ie the name says it all. Pear-shaped puffball.



Pear-shaped Puffball. Phot by David Cooling

Another bird named after its action is as a Dipper. These are amazing dumpy birds that like fast flowing water. They can close their nostrils and walk under water looking for insect larvae and the like. I personally think they “bob” rather than “dip”; but “Bobber” doesn’t have quite the same ring as “Dipper”. We saw a number of these birds in the Highlands. Occasionally we get instances of the northern European “black bellied” sub-species turn up. These birds had a black breast rather than a brown breast that our resident birds have. One of these unusual “black-breasted” Dippers seen at Bintree in January this year.

We’ve all heard of and seen “weeping Willows” with drooping branches that fall to the ground like tears. While we were in the Highlands we saw another form of upland Willow – Creeping Willow, that again does what its name suggests – it creeps along the ground rather than growing upwards. Other than that, it looks very much like any other willow.

On our home patch we have great news about the restored pond by the old railway line. Mike Rundle has videoed a common newt swimming in the pond. Ian Wilson has also taken a picture of Water Crowfoot that is flowering in the shallower parts of the pond.



Photo by Ian Wilson

The first Swallows and House Martins are just arriving back in the village, and our Swifts will not be far behind. This Summer the group is keen to do a comprehensive survey of the nests of all three species in the village so that we can establish a baseline record of what we have. All three species are declining, and we need to know where the species are still breeding. If you would like to help, could you contact info.ryburghwildlife@gmail.com with the following; your name, contact number and address and how many nests of each species you think you have at your property. It can be difficult particularly with Swifts to establish just how many nests you have, or how many are occupied. If you would like any assistance in working this out a committee member can come and help you, please just ask. If you are interested in getting involved, please let us know now and we will contact you again as the season progresses to see how things are developing.

Having come back from holiday Julie and I stumbled across the Secret Garden television programme on BBC. What a wonderful little programme. We shall have to do a bit of binge watching. If you haven't seen it, it is well worth a look in iPlayer.

In April we talked about the Pollinator Pathway project successfully linking up with Stibbard. This month we taken another step forward with installation of another bug hotel in Highfield Close. The group has previously handed out spring bulbs to members to encourage early nectar sources for bees and other insects. Perhaps we need to change tack and start planting Rhododendrons. This specimen was flowering mid-April in Attadale Gardens in the Western Highlands of Scotland and was literally buzzing with bees. The head gardener we spoke to say that it was unusual to be in flower quite so early in the year. She put it down to an unusual and varied pattern of weather this winter.



Photos by David Cooling

Last time I mentioned about Large Tortoiseshell butterflies now breeding in the southern counties. Well they are on the move. A large tortoiseshell was spotted and photographed in Beeston earlier this year.



The Small Tortoiseshell on the left has white in the wings that and has more blue in the wing border compared to the Large Tortoiseshell on the right. Interestingly the food plants are very different. Small Tortoiseshell use Nettles and Large Tortoiseshells use Elm. Do keep an eye out for them. If you see one let us know.

I would like to welcome Tim and Deana as new members. Tim looks after our website, so it feels like he's been a member for years. If you know of other people who might like to join, do please give them a nudge in the right direction. It's always good to have a strong membership.

David

Membership Secretary