

## Ryburgh Wildlife Group June 2026 Newsletter

Well we've moved from what started as a rather cold month and then a record breakingly hot May, to "Flaming June", or is that "Raining June". A family friend recorded nearly 50% of their local June's average monthly rainfall in one night. With an Armageddon El Nino forecast this year who knows what our weather has in store for us.

I've not been around Norfolk much for the past few weeks. May is a notoriously busy month for morris dancing, and this past month was no exception with weekend trips to London, Sussex and Essex. In addition, my wife and I have started to walk the 140mile long "London Loop" long distance footpath that encircles the city by following a number of green corridors. This has given me some interesting opportunities to explore non-Norfolk wildlife and look at things in a slightly different perspective.

When I was a child one of our close neighbours was the owner of a scrapyard. Scrapyards have always had a bit of a "grubby" feel about them. While starting our London Loop walk the first few miles along various rivers (Thames, Darent, and Cray) we were accompanied by several scrapyards, that had been given a marketing make over and were now called "metal recyclers". They were still noisy and unkempt places, but they are doing something that is environmentally friendly, i.e. recycling. I'd love to know to whom they sold all the scrap metal.

It was with background of scrapyards behind us, water on the other side of us, with the M25 and Dartford Crossing about a mile away and in full view, that we had a surprising variety of wildlife. Lapwing and Redshank on the muddy riverbank, Swifts buzzing overhead, Reed and Cetti's Warblers screaming loudly to make themselves heard, from the reedy ditches, and to cap it all, a close by Cuckoo calling.

It wasn't just amazing birdlife. Obsidentify was kept busy checking various previously unknown to us plants such as Sea Beet, Hoary Cress, waist high Rough Hawksbeard, Perennial Wall Rocket and carpets of Wild Clary. The lineage from some of these wild plants to what we eat today is very obvious.



Sea Beet with the Dartford Crossing at the very top of the image. Photos by David Cooling

Away from the riverine scrapyards, sorry, metal recyclers, it was on to former landfill sites with tall flowing grasses and plants, that supported the densest concentration of Holly Blue butterflies I've ever encountered, with the odd Painted Lady and Comma thrown in for good measure. In a few weeks these grasslands would, I'm sure, be awash with Meadow Brown and skipper butterflies too. These scruffy areas "unloved" by humans are a real paradise for butterflies.

I like this image. The birch log had clearly been laid down to mark the edge of the path. Not content with that, it "decided" to sprout a number of young vertical shoots that are thriving.



Photo by Julie Bunker

Nature takes over everything in the end. Part of the walk included a foot bridge over several railway tracks. The bridge was absolutely smothered with Black Briony, not an uncommon species but again, thriving in the urban environment of a city with a population in excess of 9 million.



Black Briony. Photos by Julie Bunker

Another great moment was when we watched a Song Thrush preparing its lunch by bashing a snail on the floor. When was the last time you saw that? For me, it must be years. I reckon the few (15) miles of green corridor in London we've walked so far could easily compete with locations in the wider rural countryside for species diversity.

While walking the London Loop we experienced something completely new and unexpected. One patch of woodland had clearly had a fire some time previously with dead trees and dense bracken cover. As we passed this patch of woodland we heard a loud bang, followed a couple of minutes later by a loud crack and crashing noise. We walked back to find a very large chunk of dead tree that had now fallen to the ground. Very sobering thought. As an aside, do you get confused with ferns and bracken? A little phrase I was taught is *"ferns flow from the floor and bracken branches at the top"*.



Photo by David Cooling



Photo by Julie Bunker

I've no idea what made this Holm Oak tree split. I just like the symmetry of the split tree. It looked like someone had cleaved it.

At our local level Barley has an update on the Pollinator Pathway project.

### **RWG Pollinator Pathways project update Spring 2026.**

Our latest bug hotels have been installed this spring in All Saints Nursery, Stibbard, and Highfield Close in Ryburgh, adding to the network of large bug hotels through the village and beyond, and aiming to highlight the importance of pollinating insects and diverse habitats in supporting a healthy planet.

The arrival of the bug hotel at the nursery caused considerable excitement. It was a lovely sunny day and as soon as the hotel was open for business it was checked out by colourful ladybirds and several even more colourful small dinosaurs! Hopefully the cornfield annual seeds will now be flourishing around the hotel, adding to its value to residents.

We are delighted with the support from Flagship Housing to enable their team to install a bug hotel in one of their wildflower areas in Highfield Close (see the photo). It stands in a

very prominent central position – have you spotted it yet? Thanks to their work, we hope Highfield Close will have some new residents this year too.



The Flagship team – Callum, Neil and Josh – looking rather pleased with their work after installing the bug hotel in Highfield Close.

The bug hotels are hand-made using mainly recycled wood (old pallets) and donated materials, kindly supported by Crisp Maltings Group and Fakenham Garden Centre.

**If you'd like to get involved in helping with this project, then please let us know – more hands are very welcome!**

*Thank you Barley.*

Beside Pollinator Pathways can I ask that you think about Hedgehog Highways. A single Hedgehog may forage for food over a wide area. Our garden fences that are all neat and tidy with no gaps are like no through roads for hedgehogs. Please do the hedgehog friendly thing and create some gaps in your garden fences so they can easily pass through to more feeding grounds.

Last month I mentioned about Large Tortoiseshell butterflies being recognised as a breeding species again, and the fact that at least one had been seen at Beeston. Well, another species of butterfly new to Norfolk has been recorded. A Southern Small White has been positively identified in the county. The differences between a Southern Small White and Small White are very subtle. If you are interested, I suggest you reach for Mr Google or a good butterfly field guide.

It's not just butterflies that are new to us. Two new species of ladybirds appear to have arrived in the UK now, sadly neither of them has English names. One of these new species *Oenopia conglobata* was found in a moth trap, so moth trappers, check any ladybirds carefully. The other new species *Calvia decemguttata* is orange coloured and has cream spots and favours deciduous trees where it feeds on aphids. Keep your eyes peeled.

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

#### **Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June – Pond dipping**

See what is living in the restored pond near the old railway line between 10.00am and 12 noon. If you aren't sure where the pond is please use these "what three words" to find it **lookout.insurers.defectors**

Nothing special but a bit of a rarity. A squab alongside their parent. I'm not sure I've seen this before. I have to say it's not the prettiest little child.



Photo by David Cooling

**David**

Membership Secretary