

Ryburgh Wildlife Group September 2026 Newsletter

September sees the summer draw to a close and the onward march to autumn and winter. The Met Office already has us in autumn but for me it all changes on the 21st when the days become shorter than the nights. I don't know about you, but I've noticed the changing length of day when in the garden or putting the washing out. In summer it's in full sun by 6.00am, now it much later.

With more "normal" temperatures we've managed a few more daytime walks. One walk involved visiting Ringstead Downs and I needed to get my brain into gear about chalk flowers again. We saw some lovely Eyebrights and a new species to me, Common Gromwell (that's what both Obsidentify and Plantnet 100% suggested). Eyebright is a genus of plants that has over 200 species within in. It is hemiparasitic in that it gets some nutrients by tapping into grasses and other plants. The Eyebright plants have been used by herbalists historically to treat inflammation of the eyes.



Common Gromwell. Photo by David Cooling

A few Chalkhill Blues have been recorded at Ringstead Downs this year but sadly I didn't get to see any. Right place wrong time. Unlike the zombie pond, where someone was there at the right time and spotted a Kingfisher. It really is quite amazing to think how quickly the pond and nature have responded.

Puddle is a word that fell out of use for probably 100 days or so. Not now. A friend in Hindolveston measured 56mm of rain in August, and a Great Ryburgh member measured 83mm. The August average for Norwich is 73mm and Marham 62mm. The January to May rainfall averages are interesting. In Norwich the average is 50-57mm. In Marham it's less with February, March and April each having average rainfall of only around 44mm. "Lies, damned lies and statistics."

Over the recent Bank Holiday weekend I was at the Shrewsbury Folk Festival and stayed in a barn on the Pitchford estate. To reach our barn we had to use a farm track that had a puddle that was definite larger in size and volume when we left compared to when we arrived! On the estate was a tree house that alleged dates from 1692. This isn't a holiday brochure but the Large-leaved Lime tree that the tree house is in must be at least 500 years old. The oldest and largest Lime tree I've ever seen.



Tree House Pitchford Estate, Shropshire. Photo by Julie Bunker

We talk about "Lime" trees but there three species of Lime trees in the UK. Large-leaved (*Tilia platyphyllos*), Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*) and a natural hybrid Common Lime (*Tilia x vulgaris* also known as *Tilia x europaea*). Common Limes are easy to find. Often planted in avenues they often have masses of twiggy growth around the base of its trunk.

Large and small leaved trees are harder to find. Bardney Limewoods in Lincolnshire is a National Nature Reserve primarily for Britain's finest and largest concentration of ancient Small-leaved Lime woodland.

A few weeks ago I watched this handsome Herring Gull devour a large number of leftover chips. I was amazed to see how it just scooped them into its gullet which was visibly getting larger before it flew off to digest them.



Waste not want not. Photo by David Cooling

David

Membership Secretary