



Blackthorn at Tunneley woods.

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## Welcome

**A warm welcome** from your new Chairman and what a soggy start to this year's spring season so far! As I write, Storm Kathleen is about to blow all the lovely blackthorn blossoms off the hedges and trees but I hope you have been able to get out in between these bouts of wintry weather. Spring really is here. I have heard the cheery chiff-chaff for weeks now, and when the sun does peek from behind the clouds, the Bumblebees have been foraging in the creeping comfrey with the flowerbees. (I have been trying to tell whose buzz belongs to who, just from the pitch).

Our indoor meetings seem an age away after the AGM in March when Linda (our outgoing Chairman) and Peter, both accepted flowers and a token for their years of dedication to our Society. ( See page 18). In March we also had a very successful morning meeting at the VTC, (a packed audience!) with Sarah Lambert giving a fabulous talk accompanied by many superb photographs of her year in the John Clare Countryside. We will be visiting this Nature reserve belonging to the Langdyke countryside Trust later in the year.

We have some interesting and varied outdoor walks planned for the next few weeks and would love to see you so do look at the diary dates on page 2 and book your place with Jeff.

### Chairman's annual report for 2023

The RNHS had another enjoyable and busy year, beginning with Sarah Bedford, who gave a report on her amazing trip from Alaska to Patagonia, and John Tinning on Extremadura in Spain. Jo Stanley from the Allerton Project at Loddington told us how sustainable farming systems could be achieved, describing their effect on our wildlife. The Biking Birder told us of his explorations bird-spotting with his bike, and Tim Sexton gave us a fascinating insight into the wildlife of the new heathland recreation programme at the former Rufford Colliery in Nottinghamshire. Indoor meetings were rounded off with our annual members evening, including photos taken by our members and used in production of this year's calendar and greeting cards.

Our January outdoor walk at Lyndon NR was followed by coffee and cake at

the visitor centre. On a wonderful visit to Frampton Marsh RSPB reserve in February, many species of wildfowl were seen, followed by a March walk at our local RWNR, with plenty more wintering species seen. Other visits were to Launde Wood, Greetham meadows, Collyweston Deepes, and Stonesby Quarry. An evening bat walk at Ketton led by Jenny Harris recorded pipistrelle, daubenton bats, and a passing noctule or two. Surveys were carried out at Oakham canal, and Panter's Orchard, together with members from LRES. Hebe's wood was also surveyed, and the dawn chorus survey held there in May, supported by 8 very early risers. Our final outdoor fungal foray at Barnsdale wood, was led by Tim Sexton, with some fascinating and unusual species discovered there. In August we held our family activity day at Ketton Quarry, with committee members and families all making wonderful efforts to provide interesting and informative indoor activities, despite continuous heavy rain that put paid to our outdoor insect and butterfly discoveries. Thanks go to our excellent leaders, in particular Peter Scott, Jenny Harris and Tim Sexton. Thanks also to Jeff Wilcox-Smith, who has put together an entertaining year of activities and taken bookings for all these events. Jeff and Jill are standing down from the committee after 3 years of valuable contributions. We wish them well and hope to

continue to see them at our events.

Peter Scott generously agreed to take over as treasurer in a temporary capacity, while continuing to look after the website, emailing members and distributing Fieldfare as he has done throughout the last 10 years. In addition, Peter has worked hard to update our banking system. RNHS would not have been able to function without his efforts and I wish to thank him on your behalf.

Carolyn Baxter has also combined her work as Fungi Recorder with producing our wonderful newsletter, Fieldfare, so we thank her too.

Dave Needham was co-opted as a committee member in summer '23, and our recorders, have carried out surveys at Hebe's wood, Panter's Orchard, and Oakham Canal, as well as the normal species recording from the county area. The motus tower that we sponsored at RWNR is now operational, as is the new digital bat detector, and we hope to see some of the information gathered later in the spring. In Rutland we continue to face pressure for development on many fronts, notably housing, solar farms and "conservation parks" all of which mean that the natural environment requires continued vigilance and action in responding to planning applications.

Linda Biddle.

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## DIARY DATES



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**The following events are correct at time of publication but may be changed at short notice, so it is important to book your place with Jeff Wilcox-Smith. Details. Mob: 07946733931 or wilcoxsmith@btinternet.com. Full details of all these events appear on our website at [www.rnhs.org.uk](http://www.rnhs.org.uk). Please make sure you are wearing appropriate clothing for the outdoor meetings and if the weather is bad on the day, give Jeff a ring beforehand in case it needs to be cancelled. Jeff may also help with any queries if you are unsure about directions.**

### **RNHS Outdoor meetings.**

**Saturday 27th April 10.00am. A walk in Launde Park wood** with Sarah Bedford, LRWT conservation officer. Park wood site is on the former deer park where there is some interesting ground flora, including ramsons, sweet woodruff and wild primrose. Waterproof footwear will be essential. **Meet:** SK800 033. From Tilton to Oakham road, take any road signposted to Launde. Continue through Launde park with Abbey on left. Park at top of hill where a public footpath is signed to the right and bridleway to the left.

**Saturday 4th May. The dawn chorus with Linda and Anthony Biddle.** A special time of the year to listen to the woodland choir waking up. For details of where and what time to meet, please email Linda at: [abiddle21@talktalk.net](mailto:abiddle21@talktalk.net). Mobile: 07749636919.

**Saturday 18th May. 10.30am. A walk in Merry's meadows SSSI** with Jenny Harris. Managed by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, these wildflower meadows are a rare sight nowadays. Just over 19,000 Green-winged orchids were recorded here last year. **Meet:** Near T-junction opposite Great lane, Greetham, along Viking way. Grid ref: SK928 155. Postcode: LE15 7NG. **Reserve is some distance away from parking at Grid ref: SK937 157.**

**Saturday 8th June. 10.00am - 4.00pm. Bioblitz around Oakham.** There will be a RNHS stand set up in the market place. Come and join us on a friendly ramble around town with our recorders. More details nearer the time on our website.

**Saturday 29th June. 10.00am. Butterflies in Robert's field** with David Vendome of Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust. Robert's field has been restored by the Trust and many of the 25 species of butterflies once found here in the 1950' have once again returned. **Meet:** There is roadside parking between Pickworth and Hollywell. Grid ref: TF000 150. Nearest postcode PE9 4DL

**Indoor evening meetings will start again from 1st October through to March 2025.**

**There is an error on the Contact details for Indoor and Outdoor events at the bottom of the Annual programme. Please contact Jeff as usual for the rest of the year to book your place onto these events. Details as above.**

## NOTICES

Although Peter Scott has agreed to act as **Treasurer** for the coming year, we are still looking for someone to take this role permanently. If you feel you may be able to help, please get in touch with Peter. Email: peter.scott27@bopenworld.com. He will be pleased to discuss the position with you.

There is also a vacancy for a new **Programme secretary** to join the committee. We start deciding on a new programme from autumn this year, so if you are interested, please get in touch with either Jeff or Carolyn. See back of Fieldfare.

We still have some packs of greetings cards available for sale. They come in packs of 6 of two designs and are left blank for your own message. Size is 21cm x 15cm with envelopes and cost is £4.00. I am sure you will agree that they are excellent value for money. Please get in touch with Linda Biddle at : abiddle21@talktalk.net

## WEATHER

**RECORDER Roy Lemmon**

87 Empingham Road, Stamford PE9 2SU.

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**Flooding of the Eyebrook at Wardley in February**

### January 2024.

**Atmospheric pressure and wind.** A very unsettled month with 3 named storms, Henk on the 1st and 2nd followed by Isha on the 21st and 22nd and finally Jocelyn on the 23rd and 24th. The first two were named by the Met. Office and the third by Met Eireann. As well as high wind speeds, Henk gave 33.6 mm. of rain but storm Jocelyn was mostly high winds. This brings the total number of storms this season, from September 2023, to ten whereas the whole of the previous season produced only two. The first 5 days of the month gave low pressures, the lowest being 989mb. on the 2nd, but the rest of the month's pressures were high, the highest being 1038mb. on the 11th. and 12th.

**Temperature.** The mean here was 4.72C which places this month 5th. in the decade 2015-2024. slightly cooler than January 2023 at 4.96C. There were 10 air frosts, the lowest being minus 3.2C on the night of 16th. -17th and was one of 6 consecutive air frosts. The highest daytime maximum was 14.1C on the 23rd.

**Precipitation.** A total of 52.9mm. (2.08 inches) which is 108% of the long term mean of 34 years. It all fell as rain and storm Henk accounted for 63.5% of the months total.

### February 2024

**Atmospheric pressure and wind.** A member recently asked me about the exceptionally low pressure recorded during Storm Ciaran on the 1st and 2nd November 2023 and asked me if it was the lowest ever recorded in the UK. The lowest ever recorded was during this storm but happened in Plymouth which was nearer the eye of the storm. It was 953.3mb and the lowest ever for England and Wales but not the UK. That happened in January 1902 in Scotland and was 925.6mb.

February started with 4 days of high pressure including the highest for the month with 1032.5mb on the 1st and was then unsettled for the remainder of the month with

the lowest pressure, 984mb, on the 22nd. Winds were predominantly SW-NW and were strong at times but there were no named storms.

**Temperature.** A very warm month with a mean of 7.87C which is the highest I have ever recorded for February, ahead of 1998 (7.54C) and 2002 (7.01C). There were 3 air frosts, the hardest being minus 2.4C on the 23rd-24th, and the overnight minimum on the 13th-14th was also notable at 11.5C.

**Precipitation.** Another exceptional result with a total of 111.6mm (4.39 inches) which equates to 277% of my long-term mean, i.e. nearly 3 times what would be expected to occur. It all fell as rain and there were 8 days when none was recorded. It contrasts with last February's total of 8.9mm

### March 2024

**Atmospheric pressure and wind.** An unsettled month, the first 5 days and the last 9 were all low pressure with the lowest, 980mb. on the 28th and the highest, 1027mb. on the 21st. Winds were variable in direction and often gusty and there was one named storm, Nelson (Spanish Met. office) towards the end of the month which gave snow on Dartmoor and in Plymouth but had no appreciable effect here.

**Temperature.** This was a warm month with a mean of 8.61C and was the warmest March in the decade 2015-2024 after 2017 with 9.08C. There were air frosts on each of the first 3 days of the month, the lowest being minus 2.9C on the 2nd-3rd and despite these the mean minimum was also 2nd in the decade whereas the mean maximum was 4th.

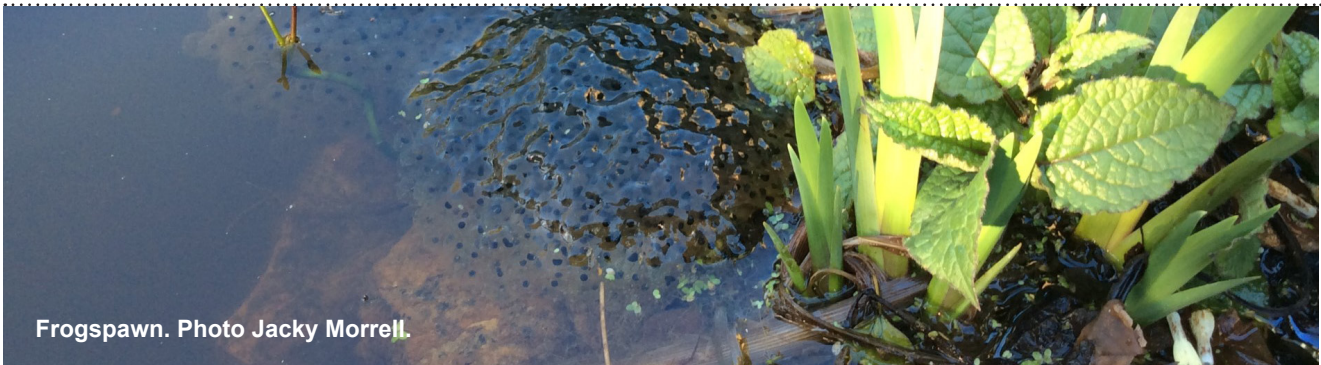
**Precipitation.** A total here of 61.1mm (2.41 inches), all rain, which corresponds to 150% of the long term mean of 34 years. There were 9 days without rain and the highest daily amount was 10.4mm (0.41 inches) on the 10th

# AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES

**RECORDER Dr C H Gallimore**

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Frogspawn. Photo Jacky Morrell.

## January to March 2024

The first **Common Frog** records were from Oakham and Wing in garden ponds on 16 Feb, and spawn was first recorded from the Oakham pond on 5 Mar. Thereafter spawn was recorded in Wing on 12 Mar and on 18 Mar in Ridlington, (see above) where tadpoles were noted on 24 Mar. There were early records of **Common Toads** – a road casualty was found on a road near Wing on 14 Feb and a live toad was seen near the same place on 17 Feb. On 18 Feb Jenny Harris found a torpid toad in a disused tunnel in Morcott whilst surveying for hibernating bats. On 15 Mar a toad was found sheltering under sacks in a Ridlington garden and on 19 Mar two were found in the pond in the same garden.

**Smooth Newts** were recorded from Ridlington, where two were seen in a garden pond on 17 Feb and more were subsequently seen on 19 Mar, and there was also a record

from Langham. **Great Crested Newt** road casualties were seen on 6 and 13 Mar in Wing (male and female) and a live newt was found under a bin in Wing on 14 Mar. There was also a record from Langham on 18 Mar.

One of the two reptile records concerned **Viviparous Lizards** at Rutland Water Nature Reserve near one of the hides on Lax Hill on 26 Mar. This is some distance from the previous records and suggests that they may be more widespread than we dared hope. The other reptile record was of two female **Adders** at Ketton Quarry on 30 Mar.

My thanks to the following who provided these records:- T Caldicott, D Duckett, J Harris, A Hill, L Kitson, M Markham, D Masters, J Morrell, D Needham and T Sexton.

# BATS

**RECORDER Jenny Harris**

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## April 2024

The weather in the early part of this year was generally mild but very wet, so not really providing much in the way of insect food for bats, although sunny days may have roused them from hibernation. The first report of bats in flight was in the second half of March, when a resident of Manton reported bats foraging on two occasions, a week apart, in the village cemetery near the Horse and Jockey public house, SK877047. On 5 April Donnie Smalley recorded two bats, probably pipistrelles, flying in tandem at around 8.30pm over Barmstedt Drive, Oakham.

The first batty activity of the year is always to check the hibernation site near Morcott to provide records for the National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP) co-ordinated by the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT). Please see below for the results. The number of bats recorded on both visits was low compared to last year's counts, which is probably due to the mild weather this year. It was unusual, on our second visit, to see two **Natterer's bats** (*Myotis nattereri*) that were roused by our use of a torch to identify them, whereas this species is usually in deep torpor when in hibernation. One of these Natterer's was roosting behind soot deposit next

## NBMP Hibernaculum Survey results 2024 (figures in brackets are 2023 results)

Date	21 January 2024	18 February 2027
External temp at start	7 deg C	11 deg C
Internal temp. coldest	5 deg C	9.9 deg C
Number of surveyors	5	5
<b>Species</b>		
Daubenton's bat	0 (3)	1 (1)
Natterer's bat	8 (12)	5 (11)
Common Pipistrelle	0 (2)	0 (3)
Pipistrelle sp.	-	0 (1)
Brown Long-eared bat	1 (0)	1 (3)
Barbastelle	-	0 (1)
<b>Total bats found</b>	<b>9 (19)</b>	<b>7 (21)</b>

to a **Brown Long-eared Bat** (*Plecotus auritus*); the Brown Long-eared bat was completely torpid. The **Daubenton's Bat** (*Myotis daubentonii*) found on 18 February was on the tunnel wall but hanging in the open. It was perched next to the edge of a crevice formed by crystallised soot deposit; we could see that there was a partially hidden Natterer' bat in this crevice and it was almost as if the Daubenton's had tried, but failed, to squeeze into the crevice beside the other bat. The Daubenton's fur was covered in moisture but not wet through. Sadly, no Barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*) this year.

The coldest part of the tunnel is always at the northern entrance, while the warmest section is near the middle, where it is around two degrees warmer. Internal humidity was around 90% on both occasions.



Long eared bat in crevice.  
Gary Grey.

### Grounded bats.

There were no grounded bats in Rutland during the period, but I was contacted by a resident of Barnsdale Avenue for advice when he found a bat flying in his kitchen. The bat disappeared while he was on the phone, and he suspects that it may have been able to access the roof through an air vent of this barn conversion.

A follow-up to the Brown Long-eared bat (BLE) found in Seaton on 27 November: by mid- February his weight had gone up to 9.0 grammes, which is a healthy weight for a hibernating BLE, but at this stage he reduced the number of mealworms he was eating, and his weight reduced to 7.5g. However, after trying him in the mosquito net I use for flight assessment, I can see that he is flying much better, and can take off from a flat base. This is an essential requirement for safe release of grounded bats. He should be releasable in a few weeks when moths are more abundant.

If anyone would like to help with counting the Soprano pipistrelles that roost in Egleton and Braunston-in-Rutland churches, it is quite an experience, and your help would be very welcome. Please contact me before the beginning of June.

## BIRDS

Recorder Terry Mitcham

30 Sutherland Way, Stamford PE9 2TB. Telephone: 01780 751268

E-mail: joterpat@btinternet.com



Smew. Photo P. Scott

### January 2024.

**Highlights.** Rutland Water had two Bewick's Swans and eight Whooper Swans (11th) and a Brent Goose (4th). Eyebrook Reservoir had two Bewick's Swans and 24 Whooper Swans (7th) and a Green-winged Teal (1st-3rd). Up to three Great Northern Divers and two Slavonian Grebes remained at Rutland Water all month. Two Jack Snipe were ringed at Rutland Water (11th). A Short-eared Owl was at Luffenham Airfield (23rd).

**Rutland Water.** The count (14th) produced 93 Shoveler, 364 Gadwall, 2647 Wigeon, 27 Pintail 716 Teal, 733 Tufted Ducks, nine Scaup, 321 Goldeneye and two Smew,. A Barnacle Goose and six Shelducks were seen (6th). There were also (14th) 75 Little Grebes, 110 Great Crested Grebes and ten Great White Egrets. Some wader counts included 881 Lapwings, 500 Golden Plovers, nine Curlew and 16 Redshanks. A Marsh Harrier was seen (14th) and a Caspian Gull (26th-28th). One or two Stonechats were regularly seen at Egleton.

**Eyebrook Reservoir.** Up to seven Smew were regular. 20 Golden Plovers were seen (8th) and on (14th) there were 1700 Lapwings, 47 Dunlin and eight Snipe. A Jack Snipe was seen (21st). A pair of Stonechats and 29 Meadow Pipits were also present (14th).

**Other Sites.** At Fort Henry Ponds there were 62 Gadwall

(21st), 113 Wigeon (27th), 68 Tufted Ducks (21st), a Great White Egret (27th) and a Water Rail (21st). A Barnacle Goose was in Exton Park (6th). Seven Red Kites assembled at a deer carcass at Pickworth Wood on 09.01. One or two Woodcock were in Tunneley and Westland Woods. Barn Owls were at Geeston and Exton and Little Owls at two Edith Weston sites. Peregrines were at two regular sites. Marsh Tit was regular at the Tunneley Wood feeders and a Stonechat was at Fort Henry (13th). A male Blackcap was seen daily in an Oakham garden where up to 60 Goldfinches also assembled. 20 Siskins were at Gt. Casterton on 28.01. 650 Fieldfares were at Luffenham Airfield (15th).

### February 2024

**Highlights.** Rutland Water had two Whooper Swans (26th) and a Bewick's Swan (17th). There were nine Scaup in north arm (24th) and a Cattle Egret at Egleton (24th, 25th). 54 Woodcock were in Burley Wood (15th). A Common Redpoll was at Rutland Water (2nd, 3rd).

**Rutland Water.** The count (11th) found six Mandarin Ducks, 91 Shoveler. 245 Gadwall, 753 Wigeon, 598 Teal, 380 Goldeneye, 93 Great Crested Grebes, 12 Great White Egrets and 766 Coot. Other wildfowl were a Red-crested

Pochard (3rd) and a Common Scoter (11th, 17th, 18th). There were five Smew (5th). Up to four Great Northern Divers (17th) remained all month along with two Slavonian Grebes. Some wader counts were 18 Oystercatchers, 1238 Lapwings, nine Curlew, 25 Dunlin, 24 Snipe and 20 Redshanks (all 11th). A Green Sandpiper was seen (10th). Barn Owl and Marsh Harrier were regulars at Egleton with one or two Stonechats all month.

**Eyebrook Reservoir.** Up to seven Smew (18th) were present all month. There were 105 Lapwings and a Snipe (11th) and a Mediterranean Gull (7th).

**Other Sites.** Fort Henry Ponds had 375 Greylag Geese and a Barnacle Goose (12th), 129 Wigeon (24th), 50 Gadwall (12th), 65 Tufted Ducks (19th) and a Mandarin Duck (24th). A Great White Egret was present (12th, 25th). There were six Woodcock in Tunneley Wood (4th). Peregrines were at two sites. Marsh Tits were at Tunneley Wood feeders all month and Pickworth Wood (27th). Blackcaps were in two Oakham gardens. Ten Stonechats were at Luffenham Airfield (20th) and five near North Luffenham (21st).

### March 2024.

**Highlights.** Three White-fronted Geese were at Banthorpe Gravel Pit (10th-31st). Rutland Water had a Long-tailed Duck (31st) and a Cattle Egret (8th-29th) with a Grey Plover (30th).

**Rutland Water.** The count (10th) produced nine Shelduck, four Mandarin Ducks, 1397 Wigeon, 155 Gadwall, 264 Teal, 15 Pintail, 85 Shoveler, 42 Pochard, 927 Tufted Ducks, 369 Goldeneye and four Smew. There were seven Whooper Swans (29th). Two Great Northern Divers

remained all month along with two Slavonian Grebes. The first Osprey returned on (12th) with 13 present in the area by the end of the month. Some wader counts included four Avocets from (9th), 36 Oystercatchers (10th), 51 Lapwings (10th), 14 Curlew (9th), single Black-tailed Godwit (10th) and Knot (27th) Ruff (10th) and 11 Redshanks (10th). The first Little Ringed Plover was seen (26th). There was a Mediterranean Gull (5th) and a Little Gull (7th-9th). Some migrant arrivals were Sand Martin (12th), Swallow (23rd) and Willow Warbler (28th).

**Eyebrook Reservoir.** There were four Smew (3rd). On (10th) there were four Oystercatchers, four Lapwings and 19 Dunlin. A Little Gull was seen (9th) with five (31st) and there was a Wheatear (26th)

**Other Sites.** Fort Henry Ponds had 110 Wigeon (2nd), 106 Greylag Geese (2nd), 44 Gadwall (9th) and 55 Tufted Ducks (9th) with three Little Egrets (8th). 30 Golden Plovers flew over Quarry Farm (26th). A Barn Owl was at Ryhall (24th) and Little Owls were at Belmesthorpe and Normanton. Wheatears were at Luffenham Airfield (15th, 22nd) where four Bramblings were ringed (16th) with one in an Oakham garden (20th). Another Oakham garden attracted a Blackcap to (15th), up to seven Siskins regularly, 50 Goldfinches (8th) and a pair of Grey Wagtails (26th, 30th).

My thanks to the following for their records for this period:- T.P.Appleton, R.F.Baker, D.& J.Ball, T.Barker, A.J.& L.Biddle, T.Collins, A.Comber, Lord Gainsborough, M.& G.Griffin, LROS, T.Mackrill, D.Masters, K.Mathers, I.Misselbrook, T.Mitcham, B.Moore, J.Morrell, D.Needham, C.I.Park, J. Rodgers, RWNR, T.Sexton

### January - March 2024 wildfowl count

	FHP and Exton Park Lake 13.01.24	FHP and Exton Park Lake 12.02.24	FHP and Exton Park Lake 09.03.24	Banthorpe GP 12.01.24	Banthorpe GP 02.02.24	Banthorpe GP 08.03.24
Canada Goose						2
Barnacle Goose		1				
Greylag Goose	67	375	29	75	36	32
White-front- ed Goose						3
Mute Swan	12	10	11	2	2	2
Egyptian Goose	2	2	2			
Shoveler	5					
Gadwall	54	50	51			
Wigeon	100	99	111			
Mallard	92	54	50	39	8	8
Teal	5	4	6	23	4	4
Tufted Duck	57	71	59	6		3
Little Grebe	2					
Great Crest- ed Grebe		1				
Grey Heron	1	1	1		1	2
Great White Egret		1				
Little Egret						1
Cormorant	1	1	4		1	1
Moorhen	10	6	11			
Coot	139	76	49			4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>62</b>

## January - March 2024 Wildfowl count cont.

	Rutland Water 14.01.24	Rutland Water 10.02.24	Rutland Water 10.03.24	Eyebrook Reservoir 14.01.24	Eyebrook Reservoir 11.02.24	Eyebrook Reservoir 10.03.24
Canada Goose	630	356	156	142	12	4
Greylag Goose	219	68	98	466	54	9
Pink-footed Goose	1					
Mute Swan	150	163	117	105	52	22
Egyptian Goose	22	16	10	2		3
Shelduck	3	10	9			
Mandarin Duck		6	4			
Shoveler	93	91	85	1		
Gadwall	364	245	155	77	32	2
Wigeon	2647	753	1397	459	229	573
Mallard	419	393	187	142	84	81
Pintail	27	8	15	18	4	
Teal	716	598	264	985	604	467
Pochard	14	58	42	11	2	1
Tufted Duck	733	857	927	84	7	62
Scaup	9	6	5			
Goldeneye	321	380	369	44	37	42
Smew	2	3	4	7	7	3
Goosander	3	4		2		
Great Northern Diver		2	2			
Little Grebe	75	81	8		1	
Great Crested Grebe	110	93	114	4	18	30
Slavonian Grebe	2		2			
Grey Heron	11	4	3	1	1	
Great White Egret	10	12	7			
Little Egret		1	2	2	3	3
Cormorant	94	118	162	9	4	6
Water Rail	2	1				
Moorhen	45	46	20	1	2	2
Coot	616	766	225	63	7	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7337</b>	<b>5139</b>	<b>4389</b>	<b>2853</b>	<b>1160</b>	<b>1310</b>

## BOTANY

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### January – March 2024

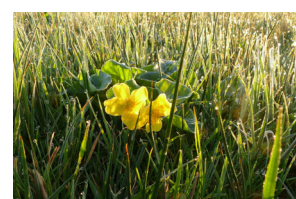
We haven't had many records since the flurry of the New Year Plant Hunt though the usual flowers and blossom are now all around us. There is a lot of **Blackthorn** and **Cherry Plum** in the hedgerows and **Dandelion, Daisy**, and **Lesser Celandine** on the verges. However, what is most noticeable along the roadsides is **Danish Scurvy Grass**, the salt-liking plant that has spread widely over the last twenty years or so. There doesn't seem to be many patches of **Cowslip** this year which is unusual, although there are one or two clumps of **Primrose** to be seen; as in other years, there is a clump on the Oakham bypass near Dog Kennel Cottage. The first primroses were reported in mid-February at Ketton Quarry and later at Essendine, Freewards. **Coltsfoot**, another early flowerer, was seen at the allotments in Wing in late February. There have been one or two less common plants seen.

**Butterbur** was at Wardley woods in March, where last year at this time it was reported from Ryhall. Similarly, **Stinking Hellebore** was found at Essendine; last year it was seen near Tixover. **Marsh Marigold** was at Seaton Meadows. It hasn't yet been reported from other sites where it has been seen in the past. Records only come from places visited. To check whether x or y still grows in a particular part of the county is beyond our resources, but anybody interested in

**Butterbur. C. Baxter**



**Marsh marigold. C Baxter**



the distribution of particular plants can check with the maps on Naturespot or turn to the maps on the BSBI website, created from the National Plant Survey 2020. One plant which will be seen all over Rutland very soon, Garlic Mustard, was in flower near the Botley Road allotments in Oakham in early April. It always pays to keep your eyes open when out and about. Back in November last year Steve Woodward and Helen Ikin saw a late flowering and unusual looking umbellifera

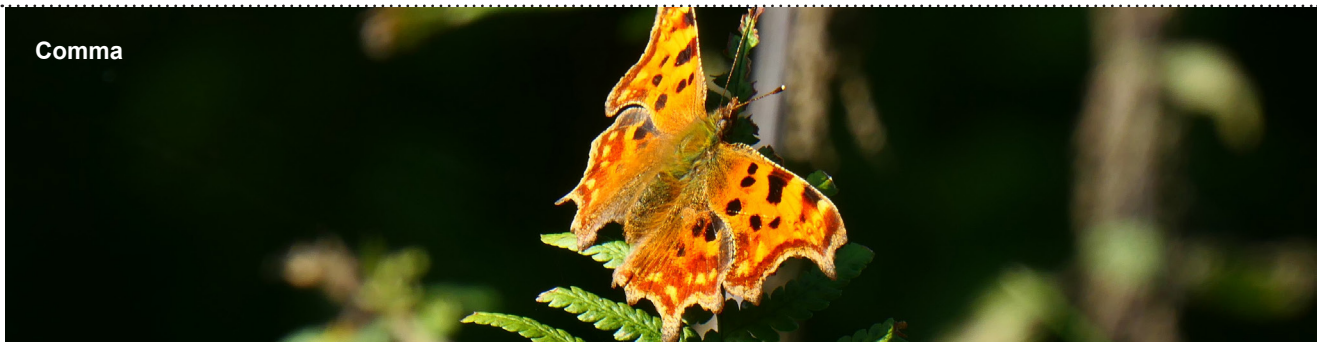
near Seaton. This was **Bullwort** which is an alien, probably imported in birdseed. Another specimen was discovered by Marin Grimes at Pickworth in 2019 but it is rare. It is listed in Jeeves's Flora of Leicestershire and Rutland as being last recorded in a 1933 flora of the counties. Thank you to all those who have sent in records; Carolyn Baxter, Tim Caldicott, Martin Grimes, Roy Lemmon, Marian Markham and Dave Needham

## BUTTERFLIES

**RECORDER Martin Quinlan**

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### January to March 2024

There were no reports of any butterflies in January. The first record was an early **Brimstone** flying down South Street in the centre of Oakham (Oak) on 3rd February. There were no further reports until a flurry of records in late March with single males seen at Manton (M) on 15th, Ryhall on 18th, Oak on 24th, Bloody Oaks Quarry (BOQ) on 26th and M on 30th. The maxima were 3 at Ketton Quarry (KQ) on 15th March and an excellent count of 14 there on 30th.

A **small white** caterpillar was found in a M garden on 7th

February and an adult was seen at Great Casterton (GC) on 16th March.

A single **Red admiral** was seen at KQ on 26th March.

An early **Peacock** was seen at M on 10th February followed by 2 at KQ on 15th March and 1 at M on 21st March. The month's maximum count was 7 at KQ on 30th March.

Finally, 2 **Comma** were also at KQ on 30th March

I would like to thank Tim Caldicott, David Needham, Diana Masters, Peter Scott, Cliff Hillyer, Martin Grimes and John Rodgers for sending in their records.

## FUNGI

**RECORDER K Fortune Jones**

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Mob: 07929895021

### January to March 2024

After a blockbuster Fungi Autumn of 2023, it has been a little hard to let the appetite for exciting mycological finds subside. However as the new RNHS Fungi recorder, I approached these winter months with renewed interest and determination, as there is always something unusual to discover or learn about, whatever the time of year. So out with the showy, robust, fruiting bodies of warmer seasons and in with the less familiar shapes and forms of blubbery jellies, waxy cups, hard woody brackets, slimy moulds and resupinate crusts. The majority of these fungi are woodland decomposers, thriving in the wet, cooler conditions, others are longstanding parasitic brackets such as the Southern Bracket (*Ganoderma australe*) which can be seen all year. January to March is the optimum time for fresh **Jelly Ears**, (*Auricularia Judea*) and there have been some spectacular blooms to be found in 2024. Look out for rotting or aging woody Elderberry trees and they're sure to be there. Fresh blooms are a rich orangey brown and soft like velvet to touch. They are actually edible! Other 'Jellies' showing in good number this winter have been **Witches' Butter** (*Excidia glandulosa*) and **Warlocks' Butter** (*Excidia plana*), both black or dark brown, which form

irregular gelatinous growths on dead or fallen wood. Whilst members of the Excidieae family are to be found all year round, they become most visible when wet and swollen in the winter months, when they grow and reproduce. Seen at Laxton Hill, Wardley Wood and Ketton Woods.

At Barnsdale Wood, **Spring Hazel Cups**, (*Encoelia furfuracea*), were encountered for the first time by myself and Carolyn Baxter. Found on a single mature and decaying coppiced Hazel, they are very easy to overlook. Pale downy beige 'blisters or beans' open out into brittle petal like florets mimicking peeling bark. Not spectacular, but a curious and unusual find. Tim Sexton has also spotted these at the same location. **Deadman's and Deadmoll's fingers** are numerous at this time of year with some pale bluey grey young specimens to be seen as opposed to the usual grizzly black swollen digits. The usual culprits of **Candlesnuff fungi**, **King Alfred's Cakes** or Cramp Balls, **Common Jelly Spot** and **Coral Spot** along with **Wood warts** on Beech and Hazel were common finds at Barnsdale and Ketton Woods. Whilst everything seems a profusion of grey and brown at this time of year with few botanical delights to brighten the murky undergrowth



– the sight of bright red **Scarlet Elf Cups**, (*Sarcoscypha austriaca*) is an exciting pop of colour, and always a delight to see. Spotted at Ketton, Rutland Water Reserve and Pilton wood. The marmalade yellowy orange of the convoluted **Yellow Jelly Brain** (*Tremella mesenterica*), frequently spotted, also punctuate the gloom of a winter woodland floor. Additionally a cascade of spectacular frills of golden **Hairy Curtain Crust**, (*Stereum hirsutum*) is worth stopping to admire, as is a fresh growth of beautiful multi-toned **Turkey tail**, (*Trametes versicolor*). There is such subtle and diverse colour variation in these fungi, hence the latin name, they really are quite stunning on close inspection. An interesting find was the once scarce Splitgill mushroom (*Schizophyllum commune*) now frequently seen sprouting out of polythene wrapped straw

bales. My find was in Laxton just over the border from Rutland -please see photo. **Velvet shank**, (*Flammulina velutipes*) are another winter delight – often to be found on the same decaying deciduous trees and logs year after year. They form impressive tiers of shiny smooth orange caps with creamy gills when fresh, drying out over time to an irregular wavy dark cluster. Around the corner from my home in Stamford, the same Horse Chestnut tree produced its familiar tribe of Oyster mushrooms (*Pleurotus ostreatus*) – another welcome February sighting. Now into April and its properly Spring time, hoorah! It's still wet but its warmer, already the fabulous morels are up at Rutland Water visitor Centre, these are the Semifree Morels and also the scarcer Thimble morels. Go see for yourself!



**Worlocks butter**  
K Fortune Jones



**Deadmoll's fingers**  
C. Baxter



**Spring hazelcup**  
K Fortune Jones



**Splitgill mushroom.**  
K Fortune Jones

## MOTHS

**RECORDER Paul Bennett**

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### January – March 2024

As is to be expected in a late winter/early spring period, there is little to report, with larval and mining moth searches likely to be more productive than finding adult moths on the wing. For those with garden moth traps these could maybe be run for a couple of hours on the occasional dry and mild early evening but opportunities to run them through the night unimpeded by weather constraints, were almost non-existent. The only attempt to do so at Lyndon on 3rd February produced four moths of two species, three **Pale Brindled Beauty** and an **Early Moth**, both common moths for that time of year but new records for the site with this being the earliest date that a trap has been run there. The total number of moth species identified there now stands at 449. There were 2 reports from a garden trap run in Ridlington. In addition to the species referred to above, a **Small Brindled Beauty** appeared at the end of January which is much more of an occasional species than the commoner Pale Brindled

Beauty. As these species look very similar when worn, albeit with a different genus, its identity was confirmed by referring it to the county moth recorder. Other species recorded there in a later trap included an **Early Thorn**, **Early Grey**, **Red Chestnut** and a **Blossom Underwing**, the latter being more local and occasional than its spring Quaker close relatives. The other reported sightings elsewhere of note were of a **Grey Shoulder-knot** at Rutland Water, possibly disturbed from hibernation and an Early Moth on 9th January near Gibbet Gorse. Larval records were of **Scarlet Tiger** (regular) in a Manton garden and another report of the same in an Exton garden, where a **Ruby Tiger** caterpillar was also seen. The only mining moth seen was of **Stigmella aurella** (numerous) seen gallery mining bramble leaves.

Thank you to the following for submitting their records:- P Bennett, T Caldicott, M Markham, J Morrell, J Walker.



**Small brindled beauty.**  
J. Morrell



**Blossom underwing**  
J. Morrell



**Ruby tiger moth**  
J. Walker



**Scarlet tiger moth.**  
J. Walker



Photo M. Markham

## Jan-March 2024

At RWNr The camera trapping project continues to give us unexpected and pleasing information. In February, while studying the SD cards from in front of Mallard hide, and expecting the normal range of common species, (fieldmice, voles, common and pygmy shrews, rats and the occasional squirrel, otter or badger) Steve Smalley was puzzled to see much smaller mice in the photos; in one shot, 5 individuals in front of the camera. After looking things up he decided correctly that they were **harvest mice!** We knew they were present on the reserve, having found nests on one or two occasions, but live animals have not been seen for many years, and it is great to confirm their presence.

Marian Markham has sent in some lovely photographs of foxes (see above). One set showed a **fox** carrying prey, almost certainly a rat along the edge of the water at RW in February, and the other was a video of a fox leaping into a tree, presumably to try to catch something that was up there. I will show you all the video at the December members evening, as it shows just how agile a fox can be and how high they can jump! A single fox, probably the same one, appeared on the trail camera very regularly in January and February. At the Langham end of the Oakham ring road a fox crossed the road in front of our car at around 9.00pm one evening at the beginning of March.

Another lovely picture, again from Marian, showed a barn owl flying, carrying either a bank or short tailed vole. A **bank vole** was disturbed by a member while clearing out their greenhouse during January, and others were caught on camera at RWNr, field 16 ponds, Wet meadow and Shoveler hide. **Short tailed voles** were seen at Wet Meadow, Geen bank, Mallard hide and Field 16 ponds. Water Voles still refuse to cooperate and enter our camera traps. It is frustrating that they don't - and more so because at the other end of Leicestershire our LRWT colleagues have succeeded in recording them on camera. We continue to work on it! Signs of **water Voles** have been seen at the reedbeds near pollards, so we live in hope.

We had only two sites where **Pygmy shrews** were found on the camera traps, in front of Mallard Hide in January and on Green bank in March. **Common shrews** were occasional visitors to the camera traps at Wet meadow, Mallard Hide and Shoveler Hide RWNr.

On the camera survey **brown rats** continued to be regular performers, feeding voraciously – and bringing along their friends to Egleton, Field 16 ponds, Shoveler Hide and green bank.

A **weasel** was observed running around in front of the visitor centre at Lyndon RWNr, where we understand he/

she regularly appears, attracted by the numbers of birds visiting the feeders there. Weasels occasionally put in a brief appearance on the camera traps, normally just a fleeting nose but a lovely image of a light-coloured animal was recorded at the end of March.

**Wood mice** (otherwise known as long tailed field mice) were seen on the trapping project at Green bank, Field 16 ponds, Shoveler Hide and Wet meadow, and one or two appeared often on the Langham trail camera, in January and February.

A **Badger** has been a regular visitor to Marian Markham's Garden in Langham, and lots of signs of badgers have been found, with diggings along verges, latrines and setts actively being dug out on a regular basis. This tells us that the females have young in the sett and that the cubs will soon be out and about – if not already! One road casualty was reported near to Shacklewell Hollow on the A606. The season for "mad" **hares** was covered by this period. Near Pickworth groups of 3,4,5 and finally 7 were observed cavorting in several different fields during February and March. Other hares were reported from Tickencote, Ridlington and Empingham.

**Rabbits** are encountered regularly on the entrance track at VTC RWNr, scurrying out of the way as drivers pass through the gateway. They can also be seen at Egleton and were recorded on the verge at Ridlington.

At Pickworth **fallow deer** are often seen, and 2 crossed the road by Walk farm path in January. Evidence for the presence of large groups, in the form of many hoof prints were seen in the mud on tracks in the wood, and on 18th January, when shooting was in full swing, a herd of 31 ran across the fields south of the village. A dead deer on the south side of PGW provided great interest for red kites in the area, and seven were seen circling over it. Their swooping over her head did not dissuade our dog from also having a close investigation! Another dead deer, this time a road casualty on A606 near Burley Wood was recorded at the end of January.

As usual **grey squirrels** have been commonly seen.

The first **hedgehog** record this year was on the Langham trail camera, and it appeared on 22nd February, and again on 23rd, 24th and 25th, and almost every night in March. In Barmstedt Drive in Oakham the first 2 appeared on March 14th, and at Barleythorpe the first record was on 29th March. These are all later than usual, which is strange, as it hasn't been really cold even though it has been very wet this spring.

For the first time ever, as far as I'm aware we encountered an **otter** on an RNHS outing in January. As we took our

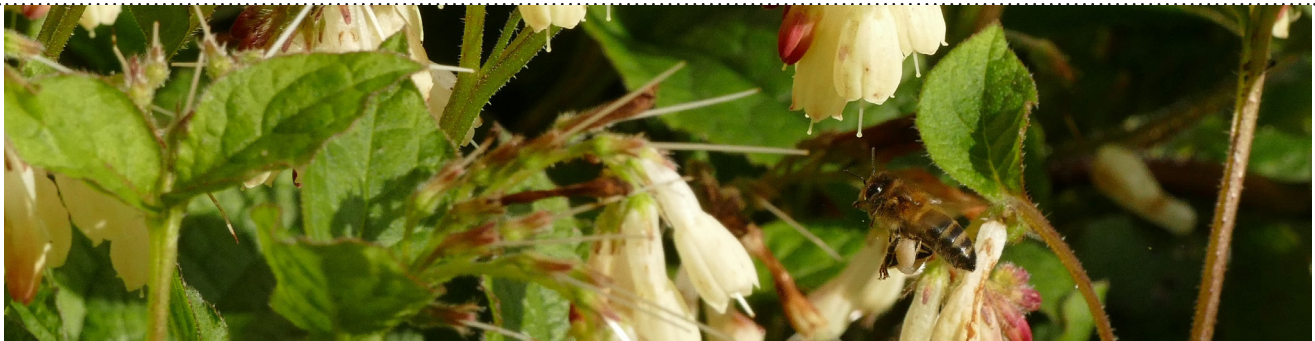
usual new year walk, this time on the perimeter track at Hambleton we walked into Hambleton wood, and two of the party left early to return to their car, only to phone us to say that there was an otter in the bay between the wood and Hambleton Old Hall. We rapidly retraced our steps, and sure enough the otter was still there, diving to collect food, then lying in the water to eat. We watched for some time before the otter gradually worked his or her way out of the bay. There have been fewer otter reports this time, mainly because the introduction of a remote mink monitoring system means that we haven't been looking at the mink rafts on a regular basis. There is still lots of otter spraint and prints around RWNR, and on three or four occasions an otter appeared on the camera trapping survey, poking its nose around the entrance, sometimes even squeezing into the box, but obviously had to retreat backwards as there's no room for an otter to turn round!

By far the most numerous records this time have been **muntjac**, a female and fawn appearing very regularly at Langham, sometimes also an adult male. In addition, they have been reported from Wing Grange, between Preston and Ridlington, and at RWNR Field16 ponds area. The very wet weather seems to have resulted in an explosion of **molehills**, throughout the county. Hills have been seen between the Rutland water dam and Normanton church, where there were literally hundreds, and Shacklewell Hollow verges, Clipsham Yew tree avenue, Market Overton, Cottesmore, and Barrow. Thank you to all those of you who continue to send in your reports.  
D+J Ball, A Biddle, Dr C Gallimore, Martin Grimes, Roy Lemmon, Marian Markham, Diana Masters  
Jacky and John Morrell, Peter Scott, S+D Smalley, W.O.Smith

## INSECTS & INVERTEBRATES

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### January to March 2024

There have been 56 records submitted so far for the first three months of the year, which I find extremely surprising considering all the rain we have had. On the rare days we have had dry weather, the insects have been out and about as the table below shows. You will note that there are gaps in the data which will be addressed prior to submission

to the Biological Records Centre. The table below also includes records submitted to NatureSpot, which have been downloaded by John Rodgers. Please keep sending in the records and note that any received after the 10th April will be included in the next Fieldfare Report.

SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME	LOCATION	SPECIFIC AREA	GRID REF	No	DATE
<b>Order Hemiptera - Bugs</b>						
<b>March</b>						
Small Nettle Weevil	<i>Nedyus quadrimaculatus</i>	Exton	Vicars Close	SK 1278 1098	1	27/03/2024
Dock Bug	<i>Coreus marginatus</i>	Near Wing	Crown Well Bridge meadows.	SK 8872 0345	1	28/03/2024
Common Green Shieldbug	<i>Palomena prasina</i>	Manton	My back yard.		1	29/03/2024
Common Frog-hopper	<i>Philaenus spumarius</i>	Ridlington	Western edge of village.	SK 8438 0244	2	22/03/2024
	<i>Deraeocoris flavilinea</i>	Ridlington	Western edge of village.	SK 8438 0244	1	22/03/2024
Box Bug	<i>Gonocerus acutegulatus</i>	?	?	?	1	30/03/2024

<b>Neuroptera - Lacewings and Ant - lions</b>						
<b>March</b>						
Green Lacewing	<i>Chrysoperla carnea</i>	Manton	My back yard.	SK 8800 0465	2	16/03/2024
<b>Coleoptera - Beetles</b>						
<b>January</b>						
7-spot Ladybird	<i>Coccinella 7-punctata</i>	Manton	St Marys Road	SK 8800 0465	1	30/01/2024
<b>February</b>						
Harlequin Ladybird	<i>Harmonia axyridis</i>	Manton	St Marys Road	SK 8800 0465	1	07/02/2024
22-spot Ladybird	<i>Psyllobora 22-punctata</i>	Manton	My back yard Gwash Valley track.	SK 8800 0465	1	16/03/2024
10-spot Ladybird	<i>Adalia 10-punctata</i>	Martinthorpe		SK 8714 0475	1	18/03/2024
Pine Ladybird	<i>Exochomus quadripustulatus</i>	Langham		SK 8432 1110	?	04/03/2024
Cream-spot Ladybird	<i>Calvia quattuordecimguttata</i>	Langham		SK 8432 1110	?	03/03/2024
7-spot Ladybird	<i>Coccinella septempunctata</i>	Langham		SK 8441 1122	?	24/02/2024
7-spot Ladybird	<i>Coccinella septempunctata</i>	Langham		SK 843 21110	?	24/02/2024
Pine Ladybird	<i>Exochomus quadripustulatus</i>	Langham		SK 8432 1110	?	24/02/2024
<b>March</b>						
7-Spot Ladybird	<i>Coccinella 7-punctata</i>	Oakham	Barmstedt Drive	SK 8609 2852	Many	30/03/2024
<b>Diptera - Flies</b>						
<b>February</b>						
Yellow Dung Fly	<i>Scathophaga stercoraria</i>	Manton	St Marys Road	SK 8800 0465	1	26/02/2024
Drone Fly	<i>Eristalis tenax</i>	Manton	St Marys Road	SK 8800 0465	1	23/02/2024
<b>March</b>						
Drone Fly	<i>Eristalis tenax</i>	Exton	Vicars Close	SK 1278 1098	1	08/03/2023
Dark-edged Bee Fly	<i>Bombylius major</i>	Manton	My back yard	SK 8800 0465	1	19/03/2024
	<i>Eristalis pertinax</i>	Manton	My back yard	SK 8800 0465	2	24/03/2024
	<i>Eupeodes corollae</i>	Manton	My back yard	SK 8800 0465	1	26/03/2024
	<i>Eupeodes luniger</i>	near Wing	Crown Well Bridge meadows.	SK 8872 0345	1	30/03/2024
	<i>Melanostoma scalare</i>	Manton	My back yard		2	26/03/2024
Dark-Edged Bee Fly	<i>Eristalis tenax</i>	Exton	Vicars Close	SK 1278 1098	4	30/03/2024
	<i>Eupeodes luniger</i>	Exton	Vicars Close	SK 1278 1098	1	30/03/2024
Yellow Dung Fly	<i>Scathophaga stercoraria</i>	Langham		SK 8441 1122	?	16/03/2024
<b>Hymenoptera - Ants, Wasps, Bees &amp; Relatives</b>						
<b>January</b>						
Buff-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus terrestris</i>	Manton	St Marys Road	SK 8800 0465	1	10/01/2024
<b>February</b>						
Honey Bee	<i>Apis mellifera</i>	Exton	Vicars Close	SK 1278 1098	1	03/02/2024
Buff-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus terrestris</i>	Exton	Vicars Close	SK 1278 1098	1	03/02/2024
Honey Bee	<i>Apis mellifera</i>	Manton	St Marys Road	SK 8800 0465	1	05/02/2024

Common Wasp	<i>Vespula vulgaris</i>	Manton	St Marys Road	SK 8800 0465	1	07/02/2024
Common Wasp	<i>Vespula vulgaris</i>	Manton	St Marys Road	SK 8800 0465	1	09/02/2024
Honey Bee	<i>Apis mellifera</i>	Manton	St Marys Road	SK 8800 0465	2	12/02/2024
Buff-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus terrestris</i>	Manton	St Marys Road	SK 8800 0465	1	16/02/2024
Early Bumblebee	<i>Bombus pratorum</i>	Ridlington	Window sill	SK 851 027	1	16/02/2024
<b>March</b>						
Early Bumblebee	<i>Bombus pratorum</i>	Ridlington	Garden	SK 851 027	1	15/03/2024
Honey Bee	<i>Apis mellifera</i>	Exton	Vicars Close	SK 1278 1098	1	05/03/2024
Honey Bee	<i>Apis mellifera</i>	Exton	Vicars Close	SK 1278 1098	5	08/03/2024
Garden Bumblebee	<i>Bombus hortorum</i>	Manton	My back yard	SK 8800 0465	1	13/03/2024
Hairy-footed flower bee	<i>Anthophora plumipes</i>	Manton	My back yard	SK 8800 0465	1	14/03/2024
Tree Bumblebee	<i>Bombus hypnorum</i>	Manton	My back yard	SK 8800 0465	1	15/03/2024
Red-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus lapidarius</i>	Martinsthorpe	Gwash Valley track.	SK 8610 0504	1	18/03/2024
Common Carder Bee	<i>Bombus pascuorum</i>	Manton	My back yard	SK 8800 0465	1	19/03/2024
White-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus lucorum</i>	Manton	My back yard	SK 8800 0465	1	26/03/2024
Common Black Ant	<i>Lasius niger</i>	Wing	Wing Hill Allotments Western edge of village.	SK 8891 0288	6	26/03/2024
Myrmica rubra	<i>Myrmica rubra</i>	Ridlington		SK 8438 0244	4	22/03/2024
Common Wasp	<i>Vespula vulgaris</i>	Exton	Vicars Close	SK 1278 1098	1	30/03/2024
Buff-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus terrestris</i>	Bloody Oaks Quarry.		SK 971 108	?	26/03/2024
Tawny Mining Bee	<i>Andrena fulva</i>	Langham Clipsham		SK 8432 1110	?	24/03/2024
Buff-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus terrestris</i>	Yew tree avenue.		SK 978 168	?	22/03/2024
Buff-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus terrestris</i>	Langham		SK 8432 1110	?	18/03/2024
Hornet	<i>Vespa crabro</i>	Munday's Close		SK 8476 1125	?	06/03/2024
Buff-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus terrestris</i>	Langham		SK 8432 1110	?	24/02/2024
Tawny Mining Bee	<i>Andrena fulva</i>	?	?	?	1	30/03/24

I would like to thank the following members who have submitted records since the start of the year: *Diana Masters, Carolyn Baxter, John Rodgers, Tim Caldicott, Marian Markham and John and Jacky Morrell.*

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## PLANT GALLS

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Gall. Wardley woods

January 2024.

Unusually there was one gall found during the visit of a small group of members to Ketton Quarry at the beginning of the month. This was a **Big Bud Gall** on Hazel, caused by a mite and easier to see at this time of the year as the twigs are bereft of leaves. A member asked if this was related to the Big Bud on Blackcurrant which can cause the plant to produce less fruit. Mite galls are common on

a wide variety of plants but they have evolved over vast periods of time and in response to the particular set of circumstances associated with the individual plant species and are therefore more or less host specific. These two are in different genera.

There were no reports of Galls in the two months of February and March 2024

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## FIELD TRIPS

12 Goldeneye at Hambleton.



Winter walk at Hambleton. January 6th 2024

Our usual post-Christmas walk was planned soon after the new year to blow away the cobwebs and maybe walk off some of the Christmas food! Ten of us gathered at the fisherman's car park at the bottom of the hill before Hambleton village. It was a chilly, grey morning but the early arrivers were lucky enough to see a pair of **goldeneye** in the water behind the gate. The male, foreseeing the spring, gave a display, throwing back his head almost onto his back, before they disappeared out of view.

We walked west down the road and crossed onto the perimeter track, going east along the waterside, seeing **mallard, widgeon, and tufted duck** in small flotillas. As we approached the old Hambleton Hall, we saw a large group of duck, which, after some discussion, agreed that they were all goldeneye. There were 12 males all looking splendid in their dazzling white and black plumage, accompanied by 14 less strikingly dressed females, dark, with reddish brown heads, the perfect foil for their male counterparts.

Continuing past the hall and towards the wood, we were able to watch several **great crested grebes**, also looking smart in their breeding plumage. In the wood there was little activity from small birds, only a **robin** gave a brief snatch of song, and a couple of tits flittered about. Two of the party had to leave early, but phoned after a few minutes to tell us there was an **otter** in the bay just outside the wood, so we retraced our steps towards the Hall, and sure enough, immediately outside the wood an otter was cavorting in the water just off the shore. He (or she) would dive down into the water then come up and float comfortably for a few moments before diving again, or "porpoising" across the surface of the water! We concluded that there were probably lots of the invasive quagga mussels on the shallow bottom of the water, and the otter was busily feasting on them. Quagga mussels first appeared in the UK in 2014 and have very rapidly spread so that when the water level in Rutland water is low, the shore is carpeted by them. They outcompete our native freshwater mussels

so are considered a pest from a conservation point of view and they are not loved by the water companies, as they clog up pipelines and machinery, but at least they provide a ready source of food for the otters! After spending some

time watching the otter we realised that the morning had flown by and so we wandered back to our cars and home for a warming lunch!

Linda Biddle.



### February 10th Egleton Bird Reserve

It was a lovely still, warm springtime morning, more akin to April than February when we arrived at Egleton. The Rookery was noisily alive with the adult birds already nesting, for this worm-eating species of **crow** takes advantage of the wet conditions and abundance of worms in early spring to feed its chicks. This winter had already seen twice the normal winter rainfall and hopefully it will be a successful nesting year for this overlooked species. The chorus of songbirds were also responding to the spring weather with the **Wren's** (explosive song), **Dunnocks**, **Reed Bunting**, **Great and Blue Tit**, **Goldcrest**, the yaffling of a **Green Woodpecker**, and the drumming of a **Great Spotted Woodpecker** echoing around the old meadows at Egleton. Unfortunately, the leader had forgotten his binoculars and had to rush back to the car where a **Buff-tailed Bumble Bee** flew by. This species had been noted during December and January even when it snowed, with one "buzzing" me as I made a snowman! This is confirming a growing trend observed of this species being active all year round rather than hibernating.

February is a good time to listen for Song Thrushes, who actively sing during this time of year, and it is a good opportunity to monitor the number of territories. There were six singing birds between the carpark and Lagoon 4. The **Song Thrush** does appear to be out of sync with other songbirds as it is quieter during the maximum spring dawn chorus of late April and May but starts again throughout July, filling the dark green woods of summer with their song when other songsters have gone quiet. The mild wet weather meant there was still several fungi and slime moulds to be found with **Candlesnuff**, **Yellowbrain**, **Jelly Ear** and **Turkeytail** growing amongst the woodpiles and fallen branches.

At Grebe Hide on lagoon 2, we observed a small group of **Teal** displaying, with the males noisily circling each other, whilst quickly raising stretched necks and heads, then bobbing down, followed by quickly raising their tails to flash their yellow undertail coverts.

In the reedmace a **Stonechat** was seen perched on top of the **reedmace**. This upland chat overwinters in lowland marshes looking for invertebrates like its cousin the Bluethroat does in the marshes on north Africa. Another uncommon wintering bird was the **Green Sandpiper** that was found quietly patrolling the far bank. Recent telemetry studies have shown these birds come from their breeding

grounds in Scandinavia, mostly the forests of Sweden and Finland, where they breed around pools in forest clearings. Their most south-easterly breeding sites are on the north-east forests of Zealand in Denmark.

A pair of **Goosander** were found cruising between the islands. The drake bird plumage can be strongly blushed with a pinkish-salmon colour. It is a large sawbill whose serrated bill is designed to catch fish but sadly, this impressive duck is under persecution in its breeding habitat of upland UK rivers where it is blamed for predated salmon and trout stocks.

Many of the waterfowl were in clusters, where diving **Coots** were intermingled with **Wigeon** and **Gadwall** that were quickly pecking up any fragments of weed floating to the surface from the activity of the diving Coots. Small numbers of **Goldeneye** and **Tufted Ducks** also dived on the edge, looking for small molluscs.

Although we heard a small party of **Siskins** in the Alders they only stopped by briefly. The seeds in the Alder cones had largely been exhausted by the finch flocks which then move on to the garden feeders. The Alder catkins were forming.

We only saw one **Grey Squirrel**, though there were numerous signs throughout the walk of the activity of mammals, from the numerous Badger setts and latrines and the runs of Muntjac and mole hills. On the bank of lagoon 4, near a well-worn run leading to lagoon 3, Linda found some Otter footprints to confirm the maker and under Sandpiper Hide a Fox had dug a large hole beneath the hide.

From Sandpiper Hide some of us managed to see in the distance, the '**redhead**' **Smew** diving along the distant reedbed. Other wintering species were found here too, including four **Pintail**, flocks of **Wigeon** (147) and **Lapwings** (346) and one solitary **Golden Plover**. There were 2 **Great White Egrets** present showing that this once rare species at RW only 6 years ago, has become a well-established species. Two pairs of **Oystercatchers** were another welcome sign of spring.

On our return to the centre the bubbling calls of **Curlew** could be heard and there was a flock of 7 on Lagoon 1 from the centre. An all-dark **Marsh Harrier** cruised along just outside the viewing platform which was a good ending to a very pleasant mornings walk.

Craig and Samantha Howat

**Species list for Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February 10<sup>am</sup> 2024.**

Linda Biddle, Craig Howat and Sam, Jacky Morrell, Carolyn Baxter, Ian Day,

**Walking to first hide (Redshank). BIRDS**

Great spotted woodpecker	Cetti's warbler	Rook	Jackdaw	Robin
Blue tit	Collared dove	House sparrow	Mallard	Song thrush
Carrion crow	Great tit	Morehen	Dunnock	Wood pigeon
Wren	Blackbird	Green woodpecker	Canada goose	Greylag goose

**Redshank hide.**

Swan on nest	Reed bunting x2	Stonechats	Coot	M+F Goldeneye
Tufted duck	Teal	Mallard		

**Grebe hide**

Goldeneye (displaying)	Grebe	Gadwall	Teal (f)	Gooseander (m+f)
Cormorant	Morehen	Green sandpiper (far bank)	Canada geese	Great white egret

**Sandpiper hide**

Lapwing	Great white egret	Oystercatcher (on bank)	Smew (red head)	Wigeon
Cormorant (on nest)	Pintail x2	Gadwall	Black-headed gull	Pied Wagtail
Starling	Shoveler x 2	Mallard	Pochard	Egyptian goose
Buzzard x 3 flying over Burley house				

**Other birds seen:** Goldfinch, Sparrowhawk, Siskin, possible Curlew heard but not seen.

**Mammals:** Muntjac print in mud.

**Total bird species seen: 46.**



**Fort Henry and Tunneley Wood. 22nd March 2024.**

Six stalwarts assembled at 9.30am on a cold, sunny morning by Fort Henry top lake where Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Mallard, Mute Swan and six Wigeon were the main wildfowl species. A Chiffchaff sang from lakeside woodland. Prompted by a stiff north-westerly wind and a dog trial, the party decamped to a more peaceful Tunneley Wood.

A walk around one of the older compartments of the wood, dating to at least 1860, was accompanied by singing Chiffchaffs and Robins with calling Buzzard and woodpeckers. Along the wider, sunnier rides there was a good showing of Primroses and bumble bees were very

active among the Blackthorn blossom along its eastern edge. Numerous slots of Fallow Deer and Muntjac were noted in muddy ground throughout the wood and Grey Squirrel and Brown Hare were seen. There was much activity at the bird feeders with four tit species and Chaffinch all seen. After checking a Tawny Owl nest-box, apparently unoccupied, the group dispersed at 11.40am.  
**Tunneley Wood Bird List:-** Pheasant, Red Kite, Buzzard, Stock Dove, Woodpigeon, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Green Woodpecker, Jackdaw, Carrion Crow, Coal Tit, Marsh Tit, Blue Tit Great Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Chiffchaff, Wren, Blackbird, Robin, Dunnock, Chaffinch.

Terry Mitcham



## Caught on camera!

Below are some photographs of Rutland flora and fauna sent in by members from their mobile phones during April this year. Do you have any you would like to share? Send to our RNHS Instagram or Facebook pages and we may include them in future Fieldfares. Only species seen in and around Rutland will be included and if you can label where seen, by who and what it is, it will greatly help.



A thimble Morel found at Egleton nature reserve.  
Kate Fortune Jones. 9th April.



Grey patched mining bee on a dandelion head. Jayne Walker 2nd April



Adder's tongue found by Samantha Howat on new grassland lagoon 6 on 13th April.



7-spot ladybirds in beechnut case. Found by Jack and Sam Widdowson in Uppingham. 12th April



Spot the Blackbird fledgling in Jayne Walker's garden at Exton 17th April.



Hairy shieldbug spotted by Kate Fortune Jones at Lax hill, Egleton. 13th April.



Browntail moth caterpillars. Taken by Jayne Walker. 16th April



**Summary of 59<sup>th</sup> Rutland Natural History AGM held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at VTC**

The Meeting was opened and Chaired by the Society's President Mr Phil Rudkin who thanked members of the society for attending the meeting.

Linda gave a much-appreciated overview of Peter Scott's hard work as acting treasurer over the past year, along with keeping us all informed by updating the Website and sending out emails of notices or changes to events. Peter outlined the successful changes and improvements to the banking system he has driven over the year and the tortuous path it has taken him to secure them. He also assured the membership that the society was in a healthy financial situation and the administration of funds had meant the accounts all balanced. He thanked Martin Grimes for his continued help with Charity Commission work and Tricia Marston for exceeding her role as Membership secretary. Peter has agreed to continue with his role as Treasurer until another member takes over. A copy of the full accounts are given in this edition of Fieldfare. Membership stood at 179, with 121 paid, 17 honorary members and 38 unpaid to March.

Linda Biddle gave her last Chairmans report about the successful year and all the events that had been arranged. (See front page).



**Our President Phil Rudkin with Linda Biddle.**



**Peter Scott, Carolyn Baxter and Linda Biddle**

Election of officers to the RNHS Committee were then voted in en-bloc by the President and approval by the membership were as follows: Jenny Harris, John Rodgers, Jayne Walker, David Needham, Tim Sexton and Joe Nourish. Carolyn Baxter was voted in as the new Chairman/ Fieldfare editor, Craig Howat as the Secretary, Peter Scott as Treasurer and Tricia Maston as Membership secretary.

The AGM was closed by Phil with the date of next AGM announced as Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025, and the 60<sup>th</sup> Year of the RNHS.

Linda and Peter have stepped down after many years in various roles on the committee. To show our appreciation for all the hard work and dedication they have given over the years, our President Phil Rudkin awarded both Peter and Linda Honorary lifetime membership of the RNHS. Carolyn Baxter as the new Chairman, presented Linda and Peter a bouquet of flowers and a voucher in acknowledgement of their role in the success of the society.

Linda ended a very enjoyable evening with a photographic journey around the Hebridean islands.

**Rutland Natural History Society**  
**Income and Expenditure Account for year ended 31/12/23**

<b>2022</b>		<b>2023</b>
	<b>Income</b>	
2,413	Subscriptions for Year	2,223
348	Gift Aid tax refund	305
2,585	Donations	1,028
386	Calendar sales	380
0	Sundry credit	438
43	Interest Received	143
<b>5,775</b>	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>4,516</b>
	<b>Expenditure</b>	
380	Hall hire & refreshments	304
460	Speakers & visit leaders	300
144	On Line events (Zoom)	144
847	Fieldfare printing	964
205	Publications Distribution	222
279	Leaflets	0
101	Insurance	101
50	L&RWT Membership	50
310	Website	324
384	Calendars production	493
439	Trees guards and canes	0
203	Echo meter	0
145	Tablet	0
500	Motus project	0
0	Dup Subs Refunded	463
193	Others	85
<b>4,640</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>3,451</b>
<b>1,135</b>	<b>Surplus/Deficit</b>	<b>1,065</b>
	<b>Reserves</b>	
8,765	Balance brought forward	9,900
1,135	Surplus for year	1,065
<b>9,900</b>	<b>Balance carried forward</b>	<b>10,965</b>
	(includes £2000 Insurance Reserve)	
	Reserves include £145 (£245 - 2022) from legacy received	
	to be utilised for ornithological lectures over time £100.00 to Gary Prescott in 2023	
5,626	Melton Mowbray Building Society	5,769
4,304	Lloyds Bank current account	5,192
32	Petty Cash	4
-62	Less Subs received in advance	
<b>9,900</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>10,965</b>

Peter Scott  
Date

  
5/3/24



Swan at Seaton meadows.  
C. Baxter

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