



Female Stonechat. Photo L. Biddle

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## Welcome

**A Happy New Year to you all!** It seems hardly a few weeks ago that I was wishing you the same in 2023; the year has gone by so very quickly. Already we have seen hazel catkins in flower, and the new year's Botany walk – thanks to John Rodgers and his small team- found a number of plants flowering (see Botany report) though the cold snap in late November slowed things down. Since then the unremitting grey skies and rain have caused boggy conditions and mud everywhere. Let's hope for a spell of drier and brighter weather soon, for the sake of wildlife as well as ourselves!

The exciting and interesting programme of events for 2024, put together by Jeff Wilcox-Smith, will accompany this edition of Fieldfare. We think there will be something of interest to you all, so please do come along to enjoy our meetings both indoors and out. Sadly, Jeff has decided to step down at the AGM, giving a chance for one of you to plan the activities for 2025, so why not give it a try? Your society will also be needing an IT person to look after the website and send out emails, so if you have skills in either of these fields please let us know. Your committee and retiring officers will all be willing to help, so don't be nervous -you could enjoy learning new skills !

The last chance to object to Rutland CCs plans to build 650 houses on Quarry farm Great Casterton has now passed, and the Burley Wood "Conservation Park" plan has taken a step forward. Please be sure to let RCC know of your views on this when the planning proposals are known, by logging on to the RCC website. While change is inevitable and can be very positive, it seems that the threats to our countryside and local wildlife are intensifying. Our society must try to ensure that developments are to the benefit, not detriment, of our local environment.

Let us look forward together to the new season and we hope to see many of you at Rutland Water on 11th Feb and at all the events in the year to come!

**Linda Biddle (RNHS Chair)**

## DIARY DATES



### RNHS Outdoor meetings.

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.

**Saturday 10th February, 10.00am. A birding adventure at Egleton birdwatching centre with Craig Howat.** We may live in England's smallest county but we are blessed with one of the best Nature reserves in the country. **Meet:** in the Egleton car park. Grid ref: SK879 072. There is a reserve entrance fee to pay.

**Saturday 23rd March, 9.30am - 12.30pm. Fort Henry at Exton. Led by RNHS Bird recorder, Terry Mitcham.** At the heart of Exton park is a magical folly beside a large lake. Discover the wildlife that lives in this beautiful landscape. **Meet:** by the lakes at Fort Henry. There is plenty of parking on the verges at Grid ref: SK948 119. Best access is along estate road from Exton village entering Home farm (SK924 114) and keeping right following road past Tunnely wood and onto Fort Henry.

**Saturday 27th April 10.00am. Launde park wood. Sarah Bedford, LRWT conservation officer** will lead us through this lovely atmospheric wood to the sights and sounds of the increasing melody of birdlife. **Meet:** Grid ref: SK800 033. From Tilton to Oakham road, take any signposted road to Launde and continue through the park with the Abbey on the left. Park at top of the hill where a public footpath is signed to the right and bridleway to left.

### RNHS Indoor evening meetings.

7.30pm – 9.30pm on First Tuesday of every month from October through to March at Volunteer Training Centre (VTC). LE15 8AD. Ref: SK883 083. Please book your place as detailed above with Jeff Wilcox-Smith as places may be limited. Visitors are asked for a donation of £2.00.

**Tuesday 5th February, 7.30pm. "The eyes have it".** Dave Robinson of the Charnwood Group of the LRWT will keep us enthralled with a talk about the amazing world of vision, defensive colouration and eye mimicry in the Animal kingdom.

**Tuesday 5th March, 7.30pm. RNHS Annual General Meeting.** After a short A.G.M. there is sure to be something interesting planned for the rest of the evening!

**Thursday 14th March, 10.30am -12.30pm. Join us for a morning coffee and talk with Sarah Lambert.** Sarah is a Langdyke trust member and nature photographer specializing in botany and plant ecology. More information will be on the website nearer the time.

**Tuesday 9th April, 7.30pm. Joe Stanley, Head of training and partnerships of The Allerton Project** will be joining us again to talk about "How we have increased biodiversity, habitat control, supplementary feeding and predation control". Joe, who is passionate about British agriculture and developing more sustainable and resilient farming, provoked a very lively discussion last year and we welcome him back for another interesting evening.

### Important notice – please read.

Anyone who has a Standing Order to renew their RNHS subscription for this year, and have not yet done so, this is a reminder that we have a **new Treasurer Account, with a new Sort Code and Account Number**. You need to cancel your old payment instruction to your bank and set up a new one for this year and annually thereafter. Because of physical closures of bank buildings in the area, it has become difficult to process cash and cheque payments, so we also ask those members who have paid by cash or cheque in the past if you can change to a Standing Order with your bank for payment **if possible**. Anyone without the option to pay by Standing Order, please get in touch with Peter Scott or Tricia Marston (details outside back cover) who will be able to advise.

We still have vacancies for important roles on the committee to take up. Peter Scott has been our Vice-chairman for a number of years and will be retiring at our March A.G.M. along with Linda Biddle (chairman), and Jeff and Jill Wilcox-Smith (Programme secretary). We need a new Treasurer, a website co-ordinator, anyone who could organise the Fieldfare distribution and lastly, anyone who can work out our Programme of events for next year. All current committee members and past members are all willing to help you settle into one or more of these roles. These tasks are not time consuming, but they ARE important for the smooth running of the Society.

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## WEATHER

**RECORDER Roy Lemmon**

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### October 2023.

**Atmospheric pressure and wind.** An unsettled month; the first 9 days with relatively high pressures and a westerly wind were stable, but after this, pressures were generally low with a minimum of 979mb on the 20th, due to the named storm Babet (GB Met office). This came from the south east and gave rise to a rare red warning which applied mostly to Scotland. Here, we experienced raised wind speeds and heavy rain (see below).

**Temperature.** The mean temperature for the month was 12.18°C which places this October, 5th in the decade 2014-2023 for both the 5th warmest and 5th coolest.

**Precipitation** The total recorded here was 155.6mm or 6.17 inches. This is the highest October rainfall I have ever recorded, ahead of October 2013 at 115.1mm. It is not the highest monthly total in that period though, which goes to August 2004 at 188.5mm. The 3 days associated with storm Babet gave us a total of 94.1mm or 60% of the month's total.

### November 2023.

**Atmospheric pressure and wind.** The first 20 days were essentially low pressure with correspondingly unsettled conditions and variable wind directions. There were 3 named storms affecting the UK but only one storm, Ciaran (Met Eireann) on the 1st and 2nd was noticeable here, with rain and wind. It produced the lowest barometric pressure I have ever experienced, 956mb at 11.00 on the 2nd. The 21st.-30th had higher pressures including 1030mb on the 22nd and winds NW-N with air frosts on the last 3 nights.

**Temperature.** The mean for the month was 6.97°C placing this November, 7th in the decade 2014-2023 i.e. there were 3 colder Novembers in that period. There were 4 air frosts including the 3 referred to above, and the lowest daytime maximum, 3.1°C occurred on the 29th.

**Precipitation.** The total was 61.7mm (2.43 inches) and represents 106% of my long term mean of 33 years. It all fell as rain.

### December 2023.

**Atmospheric pressure and wind.** Essentially a low pressure month except for the 15th - 29th inclusive, during which the highest of the month, 1037mb occurred on the 16th. The lowest, 987mb was on the 31st. There were 4 named storms, Elin on the 9th, followed by Fergus the next day, (both named by Met. Eireann), Pia (Danish Met office) on the 21st and Gerrit (GB Met office) on the 27th. There were also quite a number of other periods of high winds when speeds were forecast to be between 40 and 50 mph. At about sunset on the 21st, a rare showing of Nacreous clouds appeared. These occur under special conditions, of heights up to 100,000ft. and temperatures below minus 78°C and give rise to beautiful pastel colours in slowly moving combinations.

**Temperature.** This was a warm December with a mean of 6.95°C, a poor second in the decade 2014-2023, to 2015 at 6.62°C. There were four air frosts all in the first six days of the month and the lowest was minus 3.6°C on the 1st.-2nd.

**Precipitation.** A wet month with a total here of 117.6mm (4.63 inches) and there were only four days on which no precipitation was seen. This figure represents 213% of my long term and is the second highest amount for the month recorded here behind that of 123.9mm in this month in 2020. Some of the daily amount for the 1st 5.7mm, fell as snow, but soon turned to rain and was of course measured as liquid.

**Annual precipitation 2023.** The total for the year was 836.9mm (32.9 inches) and was the second highest after that of 2012 at 907.7mm. It represents 136% of my long term of 33 years.

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## AMPHIBIANS & REPTILES

**RECORDER Dr C H Gallimore**

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### October to December 2023

As usual herpetological records are pretty sparse at this time of year, although Dave Needham found members of both amphibian and reptile classes in October.

Records of **Common Frogs** at Bloody Oaks and Prior's Coppice on 5th and 16th October and of a **Common Toad** at Prior's Coppice also on 16th October were the only amphibian records. **Viviparous Lizards** were seen at Bloody Oaks on 5th and 6th October – six being seen on the latter date.

My thanks to Dave Needham for these records.



**Common  
frog. Photo C  
Baxter**



## October to December 2023

The critical Autumn and early Winter period sees bats getting ready for hibernation by feeding as much as they can during September and October to gain weight so that they can go into hibernation as soon as cold weather strikes. If it has been a good Autumn for insects there should be few grounded bats with low weight at this time, but it is often Brown Long-eared Bats that suffer, as some may be born in late summer for unknown reasons.

On 1st October a **Common Pipistrelle** was seen and heard on a bat detector catching insects close to the front wall of my house in Woodland View (SK866095). The weather was still mild at sunset. A friend from the Bat Group and I carried out a bat detector survey at the entrance to the artificial bat cave at Pit Lane, Ketton on 6 October from 6.0pm (half an hour before sunset) for about two hours, by which time it was very dark and getting rather cool. When the recordings were analysed by Ann, most were **Daubenton's bats**, but there were also **Soprano** and Common Pipistrelles and unidentified **Myotis bats** (possibly whiskered or Natterer's). The only other record of bat activity was received from Peter Scott and Andrew Cliffe (from Noth-West Leicestershire) while birding at Eggleton NR. As they walked back towards the Visitor Centre from Dunlin hide at 11.47am on 23 November they saw a bat flying back and forth along a hedge line near one of the L4 hides. From its small size and lack of pale undersides Noctule and Daubenton's bats were ruled out, so it was probably a pipistrelle. It was a sunny day, around 15 deg.C, and insects were flying close to the hedge.



**Soprano pipistrelle.**  
Stock image

### Grounded bats

**1st November:** Common Pipistrelle, male, forearm 31mm, weight 5.0g (possibly juvenile born this year). Released 5.11.23. Found hanging on notice board inside Edith Weston School, Weston Road, (SK923052). Released on Weston Road, close to a small, wooded area where there were fewer street lights.

**11 November:** The Oakham Veterinary Hospital rang to say that 'a man in the Rutland area' had found a bat in his bathroom. I did not pick up the message until the afternoon. When I called them back, I was told, somewhat cryptically, that 'the bat is safe, it's all sorted'. Perhaps, as sometimes



**Brown long-eared bat hibernating.**  
Photo D. Hargreaves.

happens, as the finder was describing the situation, they suddenly said: 'Oh! It's flown out of the window!'

**22 November:** Seaton. A **Brown Long-eared bat**, male with forearm length of 37mm, and weight of 3.27g, was found on the roadside outside a house in Thompson's Lane (SK94983). It was lying on its back when found and was very cold and emaciated. When I weighed it at home, I was amazed it was still alive; a pipistrelle at that weight would be considered to be at death's door. It was unresponsive and would neither eat nor drink initially, but after an hour in the airing cupboard with a hot water-bottle next to its box, it perked up and began to eat mealworms. It was fed often but in tiny amounts, one or two mealworms at a time, to avoid overwhelming its digestive system. By the end of November it had doubled its weight, but 6.5g is still far too thin at this time of year and an expert bat carer recommended overwintering it until warmer spring weather means natural food would be available for it to hunt.

**On 15 December** a resident of Ryhall phoned for advice. She heard sounds in her loft, initially in October. She put five live traps in the loft and five mice were caught and released. After hearing more sounds in November, and being kept awake, the householder contacted a pest control officer, who identified bat droppings, though he didn't see any bats in the loft. We discussed that it was unlikely to be bats making all the noise, as they would be hibernating, so I ran through the various things it might be; more mice, squirrels, starlings and so on. To date there is no resolution as to what may be making the noise, but if she contacts the Bat Conservation Trust, I am sure they will get a voluntary bat roost visitor to call round for a survey.

My thanks to: Ann Gleave for accompanying me to Ketton bat cave and analysing the bat recordings, to Sarah Bedford for getting permission for our visit from Hansons. To Peter Scott and Andrew Cliffe for the record of the day-flying bat near Lagoon 4; and to the staff at Edith Weston School, Oakham Vet, and the lady in Thompson's Lane who definitely saved a little life that day!

## October 2023.

The final quarter of the year was characterised by lowish wildfowl counts at Rutland Water but long staying Great Northern Divers and Slavonian Grebes. Waxwings finally arrived, albeit briefly, in late December. There were few records away from the reservoirs or Exton.

**Highlights.** Rutland Water had a Red-breasted Merganser (22nd), a Black-necked Grebe (all month) and a late Osprey (7th). A remarkable three Yellow-browed Warblers were ringed at a private site (10th). Two Rock Pipits were in north arm (18th) with two near the dam (22nd). Eyebrook Reservoir had ten White-fronted Geese (21st) with Red-throated Divers (19th 21st and 22nd-31st) and a Black-throated Diver (20th-21st). There was a Cattle Egret (3rd-6th) with two from (14th).

**Rutland Water.** (See also the wildfowl count). Four Common Scoter were present (22nd). Some wader counts included 226 Lapwings, 22 Golden Plover (both 15th), Grey Plover (8th), eight Ringed Plover (7th), nine Curlew (14th), three Black-tailed Godwits (15th), three Common Sandpipers (14th) and six Green Sandpipers (15th). There were six Redshanks (31st) and a Greenshank (15th). Five Marsh Harriers roosted at Egleton (14th) when a Peregrine was seen. A Swallow was present (13th) and a Lesser Whitethroat (14th). Four Stonechats were at Egleton (14th) and a Wheatear was at the dam (21st) with several Crossbills over north arm the next day.

**Eyebrook Reservoir.** (See also the wildfowl count). There were nine Common Scoter (21st). A Common Tern was also present (7th-14th) with juvenile Arctic Terns (11th, 22nd). A Stonechat was seen (14th).

**Other Sites.** (See also the Exton wildfowl count). A Green Sandpiper was seen at Fort Henry Ponds (1st). There were 200 Golden Plover near Greetham (13th-14th). A Little Owl was at Edith Weston (14th). Stonechats were at Exton Park/Fort Henry from (1st) with five (8th). Grey Wagtails were at Banthorpe, Belmesthorpe and Exton Park.

## November 2023.

**Highlights.** There were ten Whooper Swans at Rutland Water, Egleton (21st) and three over Fort Henry Ponds (26th). A Smew was at Egleton (21st) with up to three Great Northern Divers at Rutland Water from (1st). A Red-throated Diver was at Eyebrook (1st-23rd). A Merlin was seen at Luffenham Airfield (5th-12th). A Black Redstart was at Rutland Water VTC (27th). Mealy Redpolls were ringed at Luffenham Airfield, one (22nd) two (26th).

**Rutland Water.** See also the wildfowl count. Other notable wildfowl were 28 Pink-footed Geese over (11th), four Red-crested Pochards (4th) four Scaup (18th), four Common Scoter (17th) with two (25th, 29th). A Slavonian Grebe was seen from (12th) with two (25th, 29th). The Black-necked Grebe was present to at least (11th). At least two Marsh Harriers were regularly seen all month. Wader counts included c.1000 Golden Plover (24th), 903 Lapwings (19th), 11 Curlew (19th), 11 Dunlin (19th) and three Green Sandpipers (24th), plus 13 Redshank (19th). One or two Yellow-legged Gulls were regulars at the dam and Egleton, where a Peregrine was also seen (19th). A Short-eared

Owl was at Egleton (8th-19th). A Chiffchaff was at the dam (24th), with Rock Pipits there (5th, 19th). One or two Stonechats were at Egleton all month.

**Eyebrook Reservoir.** See also the wildfowl count. A Pink-footed Goose was seen (3rd). There were two Whooper Swans (21st) and two Red-crested Pochards (29th). A Smew was present from (17th) with three (28th) and a Black-necked Grebe was noted (10-24th). There were two Cattle Egrets (1st-3rd) with one (25th).

**Other Sites.** Fort Henry Ponds had 48 Gadwall (20th), 71 Tufted Ducks (26th) and 76 Wigeon (26th). A Marsh Harrier was seen near Stoke Wood (11th). Woodcock were at Westland Wood (11th) and Burley Wood (18th). Barn Owls were in Exton Park (17th, 19th). There was a Short-eared Owl at Luffenham Airfield (16th) and Stonechats in Exton Park (5th), Belmesthorpe (22nd) and Fort Henry (26th).

## December 2023

**Highlights.** Three Great Northern Divers and two Slavonian Grebes remained at Rutland Water all month. Waxwings were in Oakham between (19th) and (29th), peaking at 12 (24th). Two Common Redpolls were on Egleton reserve (10th).

**Rutland Water.** See also monthly wildfowl count. Other wildfowl were two Mandarin Ducks (30th), six Scaup (19th) two Common Scoter to (10th) and two Smew (2nd). One or two Marsh Harriers were also regularly seen. Wader counts included 2018 Lapwings, 89 Golden Plovers, nine Curlew and seven Redshanks (all 17th). There were five Snipe and two Green Sandpipers (15th). A Caspian Gull was seen (17th). A Marsh Tit was at feeders (2nd) and two Stonechats at Egleton (15th) with 40 Siskins (15th).

**Eyebrook Reservoir.** See also monthly wildfowl count. There were two Whooper Swans (2nd) and up to eight Smew (20th). 960 Lapwings and 15 Dunlin were counted (17th).

**Other Sites.** At Fort Henry Ponds there were 68 Gadwall, 95 Tufted Ducks and 13 Little Grebes, all (2nd). Six Woodcock were in Tunneley Wood (29th). Peregrines were at two breeding sites. A pair of Blackcaps were in an Oakham garden (23rd) with up to 29 Goldfinches also noted. A Stonechat was at Fort Henry (16th) and 60 Chaffinches, and 150 Linnets were at Belmesthorpe (12th).

Thanks to the following for their records: -

T.P.Appleton, R.F.Baker, T.Collins, LROS, M.Markham, D.Masters, K.Mathers, I.Misselbrook, T.Mitcham, B.Moore, J.W.Nourish, C.I.Park, J.&J.Rodgers, RWNr, TSexton



**Tufted duck at Egleton.**  
C. Baxter

### Rutland wildfowl counts October - December 2023.

	RW 15.10.	RW 19.11.	RW 17.12.	EBR 15.10.	EBR 19.11.	EBR 17.12.	FHP and Exton 16.10	FHP and Exton 20.11.	FHP and Exton 16.12.
Canada Goose	780	186	437	23	8	118			
Barnacle Goose			1						
Greylag Goose	526	395	343	320	65	174		15	6
Pink-footed Goose			1						
Mute Swan	397	344	262	96	160	99	11	12	11
Whooper Swan	10								
Egyptian Goose	47	28	9					2	2
Shelduck			2						
Mandarin Duck							6		
Shoveler	611	93	86	2	46		109	15	7
Gadwall	1611	1065	323	21	43	59	63	46	65
Wigeon	2709	1533	2314	10	248	341	67	50	53
Mallard	893	602	601	114	204	319	137	139	92
Pintail	126	154	38	13	35	91			
Teal	1215	590	960	3	632	960	134		10
Red-crested Pochard				1		2			
Pochard	2	9	12	27	138	144	2		
Tufted Duck	964	774	1030	646	605	131	24	66	80
Scaup		1	3						
Goldeneye	4	131	176		16	13			
Smew					1	9			
Goosander	12	16	10		4	2			
Great Northern Diver		2	3						
Little Grebe	223	148	103	2	3	2	4	10	6
Great Crested Grebe	447	168	65	66	36	6			
Slavonian Grebe			1						
Black-necked Grebe	1				1				
Cattle Egret				1					
Grey Heron	28	11	9	1		1	1	3	1
Great White Egret	37	15	9						1
Little Egret	51	4	2	3	6	3			
Cormorant	438	214	159	66	22	12	3		3
Water Rail	1	8	2						
Moorhen	93	28	36	2	2	1	62	22	10
Coot	1484	1085	898	607	407	8	117	122	131
Kingfisher	1	1	1						
TOTAL	12710	7605	7896	2024	2682	2495	740	502	478



## Rutland Wildfowl counts October - December 2023 cont.

	Banthorpe GP 12.10.	Banthorpe GP 22.11.	Banthorpe GP	Holywell Lake 17.11.	Holywell Lake 17.12.
Canada Goose				25	26
Greylag Goose		29		10	9
Pink-footed Goose					1
Mute Swan	2	2	2		
Shoveler		1		5	2
Gadwall				19	26
Wigeon				16	26
Mallard	1	19	60	91	51
Teal	2	32	2	12	16
Tufted Duck		2	2	8	
Little Grebe				19	17
Grey Heron	1	2		1	1
Little Egret	1		1	2	1
Cormorant	2			1	
Moorhen	4	1		19	25
Coot				1	2
Kingfisher				1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>225</b>

## BOTANY

**RECORDER John Rodgers**

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### October – December 2023

There haven't been any records submitted in the last month or so, as is usual, of course. Rather less usual has been the weather, warmer and wetter, very much wetter than some of the winters from my youth.

The situation was remedied at the end of the year when several members took part in the annual New Year Plant Hunt organised by BSBI. This year we thought we'd go to Ketton Quarry to see how this might differ from the townscape settings that we'd visited in previous years. We found 5 different flowering plants! Recorded were Daisy, Dandelion, Autumn Hawkbit, Hazel catkins with pollen, Ivy flowers and a Fleabane species. Much better was the Yellow Brain fungus (*Tremella mesenterica*) and Trumpet



**Pixie cup  
lichen.  
(Possibly  
Gray's) Ketton  
New year plant  
hunt. Photo C.  
Baxter**

or Pixie-cup lichen (*Cladonia* species) that I thought was a flower until I got closer to it.

The following day Donnie Stevens and I had a walk around Oakham and found 15 species in flower. Elsewhere Duncan and Jane Ball did a survey in Market Overton and Cottesmore. This was fewer species than was recorded last year and even fewer than in 2022, 16,25 and 39 respectively. BSBI publish results from groups around the country. The group with the largest total was from Swanage where they found 100 species; a microclimate maybe?

Thanks to all those who took part in the surveys in Rutland and also to Roy Lemmon and Martin Grimes who did a similar survey in Stamford.

This time of the year calls for a mention of a book. I've been reading **"The Lost Rainforests of Britain"** by Guy Shrubsole. A very interesting book which won the Wainwright Prize for Conservation and was chosen as the Sunday Times Science book of the Year. The author discovers a rainforest near where he lives on Dartmoor and this leads him to champion the cause of finding, mapping, and preserving the remaining forests, with their multitude of lichens and bryophytes as well as the trees and with that, the flora and fauna which depend upon such humid conditions. It is a good read about a very important topic and crusade.



Can I encourage everybody to use **Naturespot** both to record their findings but also to see what else in the natural world has been found in the two counties. In doing so we make an immediate contribution to the data base nationally as well as locally, and it allows others to gain an idea of where to find plants when they go out. I do send in records that I receive from members to Naturespot from time to time, but this means there is always a delay, so sending directly to their website is best. I will then download any records sent in each month, so that I can make up my report for Fieldfare.

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## BUTTERFLIES

**RECORDER Martin Quinlan**

4 Bayley Close, Uppingham, Rutland LE15 9TG

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### October, November, December 2023

The year ended with a total of seven species being recorded in the final quarter with nearly all of the records in October. Two species were recorded in November and none in December.

The only **Brimstone** records were in October from Oakham (OA) on 8th and Ketton Quarry (KQ) on 30th. The last **Large white** was at Manton (M) on 2nd October with a **Small white** also there on the 6th. **Red admiral** was seen in October with singles at M on 1st, Uppingham (UP) and OA both on 11th and then a maximum of six seen on

buddleia in M on 19th with four there on 30th. The final records were all at M in November with three on 11th and the last - a single - on 20th. A dead **Painted lady** was found in OA on 2nd November after heavy rain the previous day. The only **Peacock** was at KQ on 17th October. Finally, a single **Small tortoiseshell** was seen in UP on 11th, 19th and 30th October.

I would like to thank Tim Caldicott, Diana Masters and David Needham for their records.

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## FUNGI

**RECORDER C Baxter**

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### October, November and December 2023

October to December is the main season to find mycology enthusiasts out scouring the woodlands and grasslands for the main autumnal flush of fruiting bodies. But as the season wears on and the weather gets colder, many of the easily spotted larger fungi succumb to the conditions, and only the hardiest of them continue to brave the falling temperatures. These last few months of the year have seen a good variety of fungi in Rutland and just beyond the border in Stamford, with numerous reports of unusual sightings.

**Early October** still had many species of grassland fungi reported – the **Waxcaps** and the **Inkcaps** especially, but also some Agarics like the **Yellow stainer** (*Agaricus xanthodermus*) which, to the untrained eye, can look remarkably like our edible Field mushroom (*Agaricus campestris*), but beware, eating the Yellow stainer can give you a nasty tummy ache. This mushroom doesn't smell "mushroomy" like the Field mushroom though, and the chrome yellow staining is a distinguishing feature when cut. Kate Fortune-Jones went for a forage around Pickworth Great wood on 5th October and recorded a total of 26 fungi there. Of the many different species found, were a few fruiting bodies of the **Wood hedgehog** (*Hydnum repandum*), found in a boggy area of the wood. Interestingly, the spores of this species fall out of spines underneath the cap, rather than gills – hence the common name.

**Hedgehog fungus. This is the Golden variety. Photo K. Fortune-Jones.**



Later on in the month, Kate went to Clipsham, Yew tree and recorded another impressive 47 different species of fungi. Of the many finds, two were from the Amanita genera, which comprise some of the most

poisonous fungi in the country. In this case however, the two specimens were Grisettes which are not poisonous but do have the bag like volva at the base of the stem, which is a distinctive feature of the Amanita group. Both **Grisette** (*Amanita virginata*) and **Snakeskin grisette** (*Amanita ceciliae*) were found there, which are quite uncommon. At the end of October, we had our annual fungi hunt in Barnsdale woods led by Tim Sexton, with a total of 58



**Left. Grisette. Photo K Fortune-Jones**



**Right. Snakeskin grisette. K. Fortune-Jones**

species found within about a two hour walk. Again, we listed some unusual species (see field trip report). **November and December** saw some very wet conditions out in the countryside, with just a few reports trickling in. The "Bonnets" or Mycena species always make an appearance at any time of the year, although they can be a challenge to identify as so many of them look alike. Some of them have their own peculiarities though and can be identified with fair certainty. **Rosy bonnet**, (*Mycena rosea*) was found dotted around the Beechwood area of Wardley woods, and the tiny trooping **Ivory bonnet** (*Mycena flavaalba*) found in my back garden. **Milking bonnet** (*Mycena galopus*) and **Iodine bonnet** (*Mycena filopes*) were found by Roy Lemmon in the wooded area of Ketton quarry and **Common bonnet** (*Mycena galericulata*) was found in Priors coppice.

Thanks to all who sent in records for this report.



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## MAMMALS

RECORDER Linda Biddle

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### Oct-Dec 2023

Our Camera trapping project at RWNr continues to bring much of interest and is proving to be a fascinating and very informative exercise. The excitement this autumn has been the recording of a **Polecat** on the meadows at Eggleton. It was recorded on camera and though we were hesitant to identify it as such, due to the possibility (or even likelihood) of it being a polecat-ferret, it was independently confirmed to be a polecat from the photograph.

Another unexpected discovery, though we knew they were present on the reserve, was the recording of **Harvest mice** in reeds on the water's edge near Mallard Hide. The mice were busy visiting and revisiting the trap, maximum number at one time being 3 individuals. Unfortunately we still haven't attracted any water voles into the tunnel, but we're continuing to try new ideas to see if we can attract them. **Brown rats** are very common on the reserve, and may deter water voles from feeding on land, so we're trying a new idea – more on that next time!!

Our camera photographs every visit that an animal pays to the baited tunnel, but unfortunately we are unable to identify individual animals, so we cannot say how many of any species appears – whether one animal returns many times, or whether there are a number of different animals. Only when two or three appear on the same photo can we say there is more than one!

The heavy rains have caused flooding on 3 occasions during Oct- Dec, and on the first of these the camera traps were almost washed away, causing damage to 2 of our 5 cameras, which caused a break in operations until they were dried out! On another date we had images of a **Short tailed vole** swimming in, and out of the tunnel! Luckily the cameras survived that time, and the two damaged cameras have been replaced. Short tailed voles are recorded at most of the camera locations at RWNr and a **Bank vole** was seen by Jacky Morrell in her Ridlington garden. The

regular appearances of a bank vole in the Barrow garden of Jane and Duncan Ball ceased in November, perhaps as a result of the very cold snap we had.

Shrews have been frequent visitors to the camera tunnels at RWNr, both **Common and Pygmy shrews** appearing frequently, and **Water shrews** too have been seen.

Somewhat unusually we only have one record of an **Otter** this time- apart from the one which put its nose into the camera trap on the channel near the sand martin bank, one was swimming in front of deep water hide on Dec 16th. **Badgers** put in appearances at Langham on Marian Markham's camera 4 times in October, only once in November, and a road casualty was found near Duddington. Please do continue to record badger road casualties, as they are a guide to population density. A **Fox** appeared on the camera trap at Langham regularly in October and November, less frequently in December, and one was also seen in Burley on the hill.

There were very few reports of **Brown hares** this season, possibly because we were away for quite some time and didn't do our regular farmland routes.

Unfortunately there were hardly any **Hedgehog** reports either. One or two were seen during November at Barleythorpe, and in Oakham at Barmstedt Drive one appeared regularly until 21st November.

**Muntjac** have been seen at Cottesmore and Brooke, and appear almost nightly at Langham. **Fallow** also seen at Pickworth on several occasions.

Thankyou to all the regulars for your records, I hope that more of you will be inspired to send in your observations during the rest of the winter and into the spring. Whether its molehills or a fieldmouse – or hopefully more hedgehogs! Records D+J Ball, A Biddle, M Markham, D Masters, Terry Mitcham, Jacky Morrell, D+S Smalley, WO Smith.

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## MOTHS

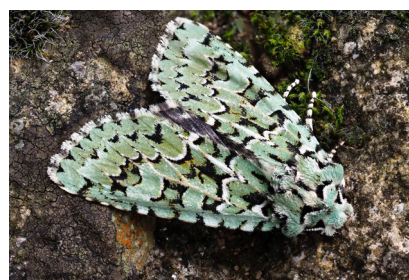
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### October, November, December 2023.

It is a reflection of how 2023 in general has been that autumn was dominated by cool, wet and windy weather, but the one and only effective trapping session held at Lyndon reserve and run on the night of 7th October was held in unseasonably humid conditions and yielded 105 moths of 27 species that were positively identified which is an extremely high return for early autumn. Regular autumn moths such as **Barred Sallow**, **Green-brindled Crescent** and **November Moth** species were all recorded in double figures with **Merveille du Jour** and the overwintering **Chestnut** both having their highest single night totals since recording at Lyndon began in 2012. **Satellite**, so named after the small white dots that are seen on either side of the larger white kidney mark, also overwinters as an adult



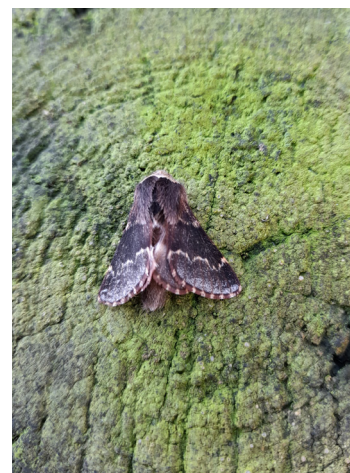
The pretty  
**Merveille-du-jour**. Photo Roy  
Edwards.

and there were 3 freshly emerged moths of this species which has been more usually recorded in the past in the spring period. A single record of **Pink-barred Sallow** was

also welcome. The two most interesting records though were of moths appearing largely out of season. **Vestal** was a first record for the site and is classed as an immigrant, mainly seen around August in varying numbers but occasionally in peak periods particularly in southern Britain. The colour of the adults depends on the temperatures the larvae encounter when feeding, with a warmer season producing more vivid colouration, particularly with a vivid pink cross-band which this moth had and suggesting that it had either taken advantage of our very warm late summer conditions or flown in from southern latitudes.

**Shoulder-striped Wainscots'** flight season is usually over by the end of July therefore its appearance in October was particularly surprising, perhaps caused by the conditions stimulating unseasonably fast grass growth that the larva fed on leading to a second generation life cycle. It will be interesting to see in future years if these types of occurrences become more frequent due to climate change. A second attempt at trapping was made on 19th November but was much less successful with just 8 moths of 5 species including 4 **December Moths**. The weather meant that day-flying moth sightings were extremely rare

**December moth. Photo Paul Bennet.**



with the only record being of a **Hummingbird Hawk-moth** seen from 5th October for 5 nights feeding on *Salvia* in a Seaton garden.

Thank you to the following for sending their records: - P Bennett, C Tring, J Walker.

## PLANT GALLS

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### October – December 2023.

**October.** The gall season continues as usual but will soon come to an end as trees lose their leaves and wild flowers die down for the winter. This has been a wet month and has reduced the opportunities to get out in comfort. Reports were received from 5 sites, RW Lyndon on the 3rd had 24 galls, the LRWT paddock Aldgate on the 6th had 22, and a follow up visit to BOQ on the 9th gave us 4 additions to the site list, Red hill Morcott on the 10th had 20 and the last, RW Egleton on the 23th, 24. The paddock at

Algate contains a number of introduced trees, including a Roble Beech, *Nothofagus obliqua* sp. which has grown to a good size. These exotics seldom bear galls as usually the gallers don't come with the tree. This site has Mistletoe and it is found here on Domestic apple, Walnut and Hawthorn. Mistletoe counts as a gall because of the swelling that it causes where it enters the host.

There were no records for November and December 2023.

## INSECTS & INVERTEBRATES

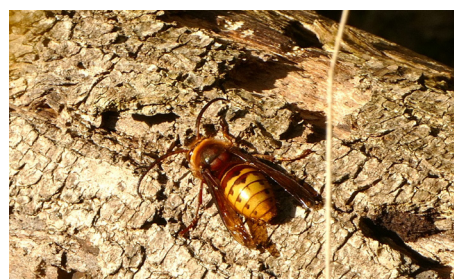
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### October to December 2023.

As I write this report, the weather has turned cold and the gritters are out. Here's to warmer weather and being out and about spotting the wildlife on our doorstep. I look forward to receiving your records for 2024. Insects on the wing have been limited to a few groups during the late autumn and early winter months. Below and opposite is a summary of the records received from RNHS members and thank you to those who sent them in.



**Hornet. Wardley woods. Photo C. Baxter.**

<i>Odonata - Dragonflies and Damselflies</i>						
October						
Migrant Hawker	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>	Manton area		SK 8743 0467	2	07/10/2023
Migrant Hawker	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>	Manton area		SK 8794 0503	1	14/10/2023
Common Darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	Ketton Quarry		SK 980060	50+	17/10/2023

<b>Hemiptera - Bugs</b>						
<b>November</b>						
Common Green Shieldbug	<i>Palomena prasina</i>	Manton	Back garden	SK 8800 0465	1	03/11/2023
<b>Coleoptera - Beetles</b>						
<b>October</b>						
2-spot Ladybird	<i>Adalia 2-punctata</i>	Manton	Back yard	SK 8800 0465	1	05/10/2023
Harlequin ladybird	<i>Harmonia axyridis</i>	Manton	Front garden	SK 8800 0465	1	29/10/2023
<b>November</b>						
7-spot Ladybird	<i>Coccinella septempunctata</i>	Oakham	Barmstedt Drive	SK 8609 2852	5	10/11/2023
Harlequin Ladybird	<i>Harmonia axyridis</i>	Oakham	Barmstedt Drive	SK 8609 2852	2	10/11/2023
7-spot ladybird	<i>Coccinella 7-punctata</i>	Wing	Crown Well bridge area.	SK 8848 0334	1	24/12/2023
<b>Diptera - Flies</b>						
<b>October</b>						
	<i>Eupeodes corollae</i>	Manton	Back yard	SK 8800 0465	1	17/10/2023
Marmalade Hoverfly	<i>Episyrphus balteatus</i>	Manton	Front garden	SK 8800 0465	1	29/10/2023
	<i>Eristalis tenax</i>	Manton	Front garden	SK 8800 0465	1	29/10/2023
<b>November</b>						
Marmalade Hoverfly	<i>Episyrphus balteatus</i>	Manton	Front garden	SK 8800 0465	1	23/11/2023
Common Snout-hoverfly	<i>Rhingia campestris</i>	Manton	Front garden	SK 8800 0465	1	18/11/2023
<b>Hymenoptera - Ants, Wasps, Bees &amp; Relatives</b>						
<b>October</b>						
Buff-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus terrestris</i>	Manton	Front garden	SK 8800 0465	2	29/10/2023
White-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus lucorum</i>	Manton	Front garden	SK 8800 0465	1	29/10/2023
Honey Bee	<i>Apis mellifera</i>	Manton	Front garden	SK 8800 0465	2	29/10/2023
<b>November</b>						
Hornet	<i>Vespa crabro</i>	Wardley	Woods	SK 841 001	1	08/11/2023
Honey Bee	<i>Apis mellifera</i>	Manton	Front garden.	SK 8800 0465	2	23/11/2023
Buff-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus terrestris</i>	Manton	Front garden.	SK 8800 0465	1	30/11/2023
Garden Bumblebee	<i>Bombus hortorum</i>	Manton	Front garden.	SK 8800 0465	1	23/11/2023
Common Wasp	<i>Vespula vulgaris</i>	Manton	Back garden.	SK 8800 0465	1	01/11/2023
<b>December</b>						
Buff-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus terrestris</i>	Manton	Back garden.	SK 8800 0465	1	17/12/2023

## FIELD TRIPS

### RNHS Fungal foray in Barnsdale woods 29th October 2023

This year's walk took place on a cloudy, but not too cold afternoon in Barnsdale woods, and later, on the grass verges up near the car parks. Tim Sexton, species and recording officer for LRWT, led 14 of us down to the ancient SSSI woodland and it didn't take long to spot the black hemispherical fruits of King Alfred's cakes dotted along the fallen branches of Ash, and the pretty fan shaped Turkey tail fungus. We found numerous species of crusts and large bracket fungi clinging to both dead and alive tree trunks and branches – Oak curtain crust, Hairy curtain crust, Beefsteak fungus, Ganoderma sp., Blushing bracket (brackets). There were fingers, ears, brains, and tufts, parachutes, and funnels to name but a few of the common

names. Amongst all the leaf litter were the delicate little Mycena fungi, commonly called "The bonnets" and further down in the Beechwood area we found the lovely little Saffrondrop bonnet (*Mycena crocata*). They were found in little groups and seem to be associated with Beech trees. A bit later in the afternoon, we left the woods to have a look at an area of grassland near the car parking bays, to see if there were any fungi specific to unimproved grasslands. Its always nice to find waxcaps in a patch of grass as they are a good indicator of the kind of unimproved grassland you are looking for. Here we found the Snowy waxcap, Blackening waxcap and a lovely patch of Parrot waxcaps, all in the same grassy area. Parrot waxcaps emerge with



a glutinous conical green cap, some with hints of yellow and pink and although not rare, are still delightful to see. We almost didn't spot some more specialized grassland species hiding in the grass near the waxcaps, but when our eyes became accustomed, we soon found many clumps of these little club-like fungi – yellowish fingers of Apricot club, and the whiter Skinny club. A fungus closely related to Dead-mans's fingers which are found in woodlands, were the black fingers of two species of Earthtongue –

Hairy earthtongue and another one without a common name "Geoglossum cookeanum". Finally, on the bank on the other side of the road, a younger member of the group found the strange white shape of a White saddle fungus which added to our impressive list of 58 species of all kinds of fungi found on our autumn woodland and grassland walk. Many thanks to Tim, who kept our interest by naming many of the species found for us.

## News from our members

**Several years ago** the Hawk & Owl Trust gave us a barn owl box which they installed on a willow tree 100 yards from our house at the bottom of the garden. Simon from the Hawk & Owl Trust came regularly to check it and soon he found that.... stock doves had nested in it. In 2021 a dead male kestrel was found there and Simon said that at least they know where to find it (we wondered how a dead kestrel could tell other Kestrels about it!!) By this time Simon had turned the box round to face away from our garden towards an open field. In 2022 he was unable to come due to bird flu.

One evening in August 2023, when Duncan was attending to a bonfire at the bottom of the garden at dusk, he heard a strange hissing sound and possible flapping noises emanating, he thought, from the box. He emailed Simon who came along on the 2nd September (2023) with his ladder. Much to our delight, and his, there was a single young female barn owl youngster which was duly ringed, measured, weighed and photographed etc. Our box was one of only two in Rutland that he knew of with that year's young. He thought this was due to a drop in the vole population.

As the name "Barney" the Barn Owl didn't seem appropriate, we named her Bonnie. Later that week we positioned ourselves comfortably at the bottom of the garden and had a good view of Bonnie flying from the box to a tree and back again, and were excited to see a successful fledgling.

Simon said the box may have been used last year also and that he is pretty sure it will be used again by the



**Bonnie the fledgling barn owl in Jane and Duncans Barn owl box in Barrow.**

parents in 2024.

We occasionally see barn owls around here but we have never seen a tawny owl, despite hearing them very frequently, and also the call of the youngsters. One lunchtime in July imagine our surprise, looking out of the kitchen window, to see a tawny owl on the lawn looking into a bush. We assumed it was a 2023 fledgling. It flew off after a couple of minutes. What a beautiful bird!

Jane and Duncan Ball

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