

Raynhams' Newsletter - March 2021

Welcome to this month's issue!

Some quick notices to begin with - as you may have guessed the Easter coffee morning on Saturday 3rd April at West Raynham Village Hall is cancelled due to the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions. However, we still need any unwanted gifts or other pieces that can be used as prizes for tombola and raffle draws in the future. Items can be left in the Reading Room from April, when all the decorating work will hopefully have finished.

Regarding the Solar Fund projects for garden birds, there are eight open fronted nest boxes still available for free from Helen Brooke (Tel. 01328 838220), and peanut and sunflower feeders and bird food can be obtained, also for free, from Andrew Buck (email andrew.buck@chemspec.co.uk).

An Igloo in The Orchard

During the past month we've had snow, sunshine and misty days - it's almost like being in California! Over in The Orchard, Konstantinos 'Costa' Sotirianos spent 15 hours making an igloo, which must be a first for The Raynhams! Costa is always finding ways to bring a smile to his neighbours and radiates much-needed positivity. Many of the children on The Orchard estate have made a special visit just to see the igloo. Thanks to Jack O'Donnell for letting us know about Costa's work and for sending over these photos!



North Norfolk Sustainable Communities Fund

This fund was formerly known as the Big Society Fund and is provided by North Norfolk District Council to help build strong sustainable communities in the district. It aims to help communities to develop new and innovative projects which will improve their environmental, social and economic wellbeing.

The fund is open to applications throughout the year, although to ensure your application is eligible to go through for consideration to the June 2021 Grant Panel, only applications received by Monday, 10th May which are fully completed, signed, and accompanied by all the requested supporting documentation will be accepted.

Prior to completing an application please ring Sonia Shuter on 01263 516173 to discuss the potential application.

There are now two types of application that can be made to the fund;

- Applications for grants under £1,000 and
- Applications for grants between £1,000 and £15,000.

Copies of the Application Forms, Guidance Notes on how to complete the form, and the Independent Referee form, can be downloaded from the North Norfolk District Council website at <https://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/NNSCF>.

Please Note - The forms need to be downloaded and saved prior to entering information and should not be converted to another format.

Completed applications including all supporting documentation should be sent to supporting.communities@north-norfolk.gov.uk.

Online Arthritis Action Groups

My name is Marc and I am Area Coordinator for the UK charity Arthritis Action. We give hands-on, practical help to combat the pain of arthritis through self-management and lifestyle advice. We provide a range of free resources including factsheets, exercises, recipes and videos. To support people living with arthritis, we also run online Arthritis Action Groups, including groups for the East of England, and evening groups.

Arthritis Action Groups are an opportunity for people with arthritis to talk with others and share their tips on how to manage their arthritis and stay active whilst at home, and we actively welcome new attendees. We discuss a variety of self-management techniques. Participants will need to contact us directly for the log-in instructions for the meeting, and we have produced 'How To' guides for those not familiar with using Zoom. Dates for online meetings of the East Anglia and Norfolk and Suffolk groups can be found at: <http://www.arthritisaction.org.uk/media-centre/events>.

Marc Williams, Tel: 020 3781 7120

Newsletter Info and Contact Details

- Deadline for articles or notices is the 28th of each month
- westray.newsletter@gmail.com to subscribe or unsubscribe from the newsletter
- <https://www.raynhampc.info/documents> to view and download newsletters

Green Shoots on Raynham Estate - Jo Bosch

We've certainly started to see a few green shoots in the last couple of weeks, in more ways than one!

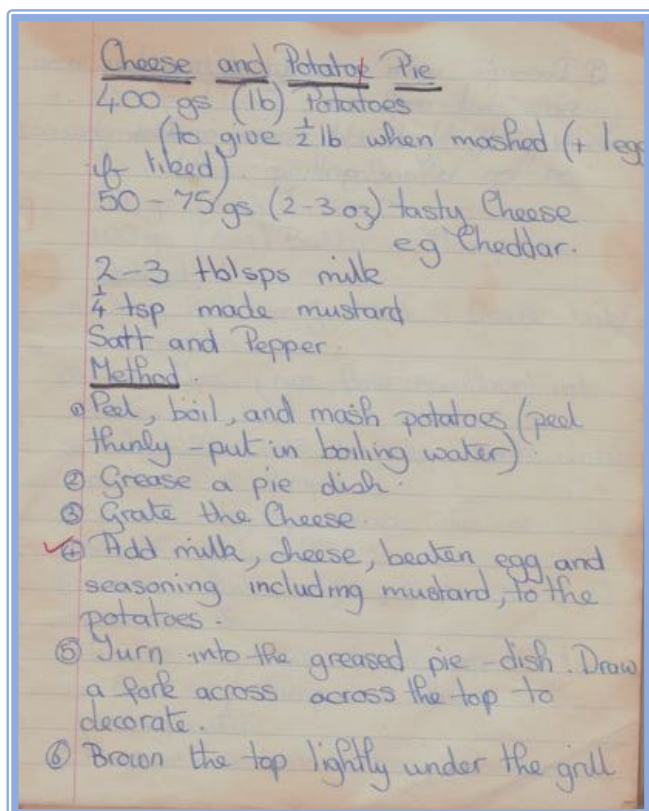
Swathes of snowdrops are providing quite a display across the estate, and the green haze of crops growing is starting to appear. The much-awaited timetable for the relaxation of restrictions has also meant that we can start to think about planning some small-scale events over the summer, including theatre in the Walled Garden, some outdoor pop-up food events, and hopefully the return of fireworks in November. We'll be announcing more on this over the coming weeks, so keep an eye on our social media pages or at <https://www.raynham.co.uk/>.

Around the estate, John, our workshop manager, has been busy fabricating a new cattle grid and this has been installed by the Church. Down on the farm, we've welcomed our first calves, and they and their mothers will be turned back out onto grass quite soon now. Please be aware of this if you are walking the estate, particularly if you have a dog with you, and follow the Countryside Code.

Spring drilling will begin in the coming days and, as always, we'll try to keep any disruption through the villages to a minimum. By the time you read this, we will also have finished hedge cutting.

Have a wonderful 'Mad March' everyone and let's hope those green shoots keep growing!

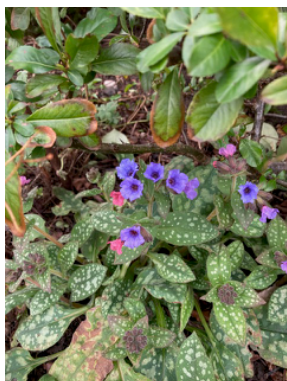
Recipe Corner: Cheese and Potato Pie - Judy Pell



This recipe comes straight from my school 'Cookery' note book from the mid-1970s in North Walsham (with spelling mistakes and teacher's corrections included, thankfully my spelling has improved, I think!). It's a great winter warmer and very adaptable - any cheese you like and if you are using left over mash then just bake it to make sure it's nice and hot. You can add chopped grilled bacon or ham, herbs, or fried onions; swap out some of the potato for swede, cauliflower or parsnip in the mash; or have it plain with a steak and salad - just let your imagination fly. My memory of the cookery lessons is hazy (it was a long time ago after all), but I don't ever remember including the egg whenever I've made it subsequently, and more cheese, especially on top is never a bad thing (probably my Mum's recommendation). Hope you enjoy it!

Greenhouse and Garden - Bridget Stanley

We have been enjoying lovely mild weather this last week of February. Flowers to enjoy in the garden at the moment are Pulmonaria, Hellebore, Viburnum, Rosemary, Snowdrops and Hazel catkins. They are a cheerful sight! Weeds are also delighting in the mild weather too. I don't mind most of them as dandelions, daisies and nettles are great for supporting wildlife, but it's best to keep on top of them in the fruit and veg beds.



I have just about finished pruning the shrub roses and the apple and pear trees, and the currants and gooseberries will be pruned this week. I am going to plant a couple of new potatoes in pots in the greenhouse over this coming weekend, and then will plant the remainder in the ground, usually in mid- to late-March. The kale and broccoli are still providing fresh greens for now, and I have mulched up the asparagus with fresh compost.

I am sowing seeds which will keep in the warmth of the house for a couple of months yet. Trailing lobelia and sweet peppers now, then marigolds and basil, to be followed by tomatoes and cucumber towards the end of March and into April. Assorted hardy annual flower seeds will be sown direct into the ground towards the end of March too. My delphinium and phlox (sown in summer last year in pots) will be planted out into their flowering position this month too.

Lots to look forward to!

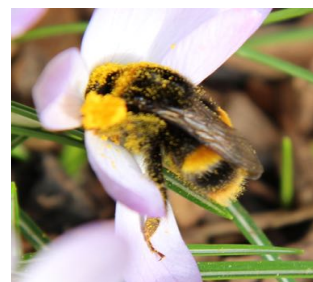
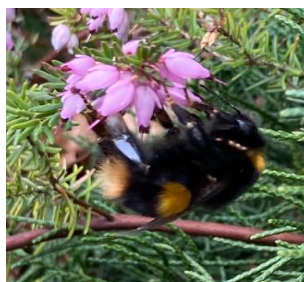
Insects in the Garden - Paresh Shah

While cleaning out our nest boxes a few weeks ago, I found one filled with overwintering harlequin ladybirds, and quite a few more in the bark behind the nest box.



Honey bees and large queen bumblebees have been noticeable on sunny days, with several feeding on our crocuses and flowering heather.

The nectar provides queen bumblebees with sugar for energy while the pollen is a protein source they use to produce their eggs which are laid into [pollen and wax capsules](#). The eggs hatch and develop into worker females which emerge in early Spring.



Buff-tailed bumblebee *Bombus terrestris*

Nature Notes for February 2021 - David Stubbs



Sunset over the solar farm, 11 February

No surprise that the big story for this edition is the snow and freezing conditions that beset us in the middle of February. As always with hard weather, there is a lot of wildlife movement. Some you can see as tracks in the snow, but I am really referring to more dramatic displacements of large numbers of birds.

The strong easterlies brought with them unusually large numbers of woodcock, fleeing even harsher continental weather. Sadly, many perished and there were plenty of reports of dead birds along the Norfolk coast. The survivors turned up in all sorts of different places, including people's gardens. I saw one flying over our garden in West Raynham on the 9th along with about 20 lapwings. There were many snipe in our area: in the parkland, along the Wensum corridor and up by the solar farm and airfield, and among the latter was one jack snipe - a smaller relative of the common snipe. Perhaps the biggest surprise was a short-eared owl, also up near the airfield.

Many more birds were coming to garden feeders. When I watch them desperately filling up on seeds and nuts, I marvel at how such diminutive creatures manage to survive these conditions. Of course, it is natural to have periods of cold weather and wildlife is adapted for this, but it is a wonder nonetheless. Remember too, that many species have declined in number considerably in recent decades due to habitat loss, so their populations are less able to take a 'hit' from periods of extreme weather.

Almost as soon as the thaw had begun, there were signs of spring all around. Flowers blooming, frogs spawning, first butterflies on the wing and more and more birds singing. Particularly noticeable are the thrushes, especially blackbirds, song thrushes and mistle thrushes. While these are mostly breeding birds establishing territory, less familiar perhaps are the congregations of redwings, a common winter visitor - that gather in large groups for a communal sing song before they disperse back to their Scandinavian breeding grounds. A good place to hear this phenomenon is along the riverside path between West and South Raynham. It is quite an impressive chorus, with dozens of birds singing together in the alders.

Take a walk along the local lanes and you should hear plenty of skylarks and yellowhammers, and of course look out for hares and deer that are getting more active now. The drumming of great spotted woodpeckers is another common sound, or you may even hear an occasional yaffling call of the green woodpecker.

A wandering goose

I have taken a keen interest in the large flock of greylag geese, numbering over 600 birds at its peak in January. They spent most of their time in parkland pasture fields either side of Raynham Lake, only sometimes venturing onto nearby ploughed fields.

However, this apparent sedentary lifestyle belied what is really a population that moves about more than you'd think. The fact that some days there would be 'only' 300 geese and other days many more, means that some individuals are coming and going from further afield. There are also distinguishable individuals that turn up for a few days and then disappear. It makes you wonder how far and wide do they go?



At the beginning of January, I noticed one of the greylags had an orange collar on its neck. With the aid of my telescope I was able to read its identity: the letters PAP. I got in touch with the British Trust for Ornithology who oversee all things to do with bird ringing from their HQ in Thetford. The staff member with whom I was put in touch was on temporary furlough (I never thought I would get that word into nature notes, but hey...), so I had to

wait a couple of weeks to find out about our new visitor.

To be honest, I was rather hoping that PAP would turn out to be a long distant migrant from the far north, maybe Orkney, or even Iceland. It turned out that he was ringed at Cranwich, a place just 22 miles south of West Raynham in July 2019, one of a moulting flock that was caught that day. He was also seen at the same location a month later, but not reported since.

I say he, because he was a large bird and strutted around in a gander fashion, or at least that was the considered verdict of a knowledgeable friend of mine who came to see for himself. PAP remained with us throughout January, but has not been here at all in February. I did hear, however, that someone has seen him on a pond in East Rudham!

Since the snow has disappeared, so too have most of our geese. The big flock was apparently over at Great Ryburgh for a while, otherwise various small groups of geese have split off and gone their separate ways. There's only a couple of dozen or so still in West Raynham and they are mostly in pairs now.

Nevertheless, they are still worth checking on every day. Earlier in the month I noticed two pink-footed geese had dropped in briefly - they were a one-day wonder. Likewise, on 22nd February a single white-fronted goose turned up. This winter has been good for this species, with flocks of many tens scattered across the country. I thought we would miss out entirely, but it was good to sneak one in at the end.

Finally, another sign of early spring, we have Egyptian goslings in the parkland. I saw six tiny fluff-balls with their parents, also on the 22nd, and they were still there at the end of the month. Egyptian geese are typically early breeders - last year there was an early brood in January, but they didn't survive. Let's hope for better news this time.

If you have any unusual nature observations please let me know:
David Stubbs: davidstubbs1@btinternet.com or WhatsApp me on 07974922197