



Lye Valley Wildlife News

What to see in the valley in WINTER 2023

Judy Webb



A Frosty Winter view down the Valley in the North Fen area.

This stunning winter landscape view down the valley is by Tony Gillie, who also took the bird photos. With annual cutting and mostly raking done by Friends of Lye Valley volunteers, the 'bare bones' of the valley are visible.

Plants and insects are all asleep; frogs, toads, newts, small mammals, grass snakes, lizards and slow-worms are all hibernating safe in the habitat piles. What is there to see? Invertebrates are asleep in the piles, so if we have to move a pile, we get a glimpse of inhabitants (which we then re-home) such as this brilliant Blue shield bug *Zicrona caerulea* and a juvenile smooth newt.



Blue Shield Bug and juvenile Smooth Newt

After a deluge of rain all autumn, the most interesting news all concerns fungi, which were stimulated by the rain into fruiting. Several new site species records were achieved.

Working on the stream bank defences at the end of October, volunteers found a dead branch with this stunning blue encrusting fungus – the Cobalt crust *Teranea caerulea* - very interesting and quite rarely encountered.



Cobalt Crust fungus on dead wood

In the autumn, because of all the rain, fungi have been much stimulated to produce their toadstools and brackets which make the airborne spores. In the restoring west side fen, we sometimes come across what look like boiled sweets but are the shiny slimy red orange caps of the Blackening Waxcap *Hygrocybe conica*. They are so pretty to start with but then turn sooty black. This autumn our most poisonous fungus to date decided to emerge – the Deadly Dapperling *Lepiota brunneoincarnata* – with those wavy maroon bands on the stalk.



Blackening Waxcaps left and Deadly Dapperlings on the right

On deadwood in the valley, fungi help by rotting logs; they do the essential job of recycling the wood. Here some very common but attractive Turkey Tail *Trametes versicolor* on dead willow. Our first Shaggy Parasol Toadstools appeared on leaf litter underneath an oak tree.



Turkey Tail on left and Shaggy Parasol cap on the right

All the hawthorn berries were consumed fairly early this winter and now birds are feeding on the abundant ivy berries, here being enjoyed by our blackbirds. Sadly, one of our large ash trees had to be felled because of Ash Dieback. This however means more log piles for all wildlife, especially our resident wrens who spend a lot of time foraging in them for hibernating insects.



Read more about the Valley birds in Tom Bedford's ebird observations. For Lye Valley and Warneford Meadow go to <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L8899589>



Thanks to you all for your support for another year and I hope 2024 will be better for the valley wildlife and for all of us. Will it be a Climate Change hot and dry summer or Climate Change cold and wet summer?

Whichever, we hope valley wildlife can cope and all that we do in our volunteer work is helping increase resilience to current and future challenging conditions.

Photos: Judy Webb and Tony Gillie **Contact:** friendsoflyevalley@yahoo.co.uk

Don't forget to look at our website <http://www.friendsoflyevalley.org.uk/> where you can see weekly news of the work of the volunteer group and more wildlife in our **Facebook** and **Twitter**.