



## Spring 2022 News

### Welcome

**What a mixed summer we're having - hot sunshine and heavy downpours. We hope you've been making the most of it when you've been able to! There's still another month of summer left before we start to notice season turning to autumn - what wildlife will you spot?**

We have recently recruited a couple of new committee members (please get in touch if you're interested in joining us) and, at the time of writing, we are starting to look at what walks, talks or other activities we can put on to help you discover more about Redditch's amazing natural world. We have nothing organised at the moment but hope to bring you news in your winter newsletter.

In the meantime, our colleagues at Trust HQ are hoping to continue online talks via Zoom so please keep check the events webpages for what's coming up...

[www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on)

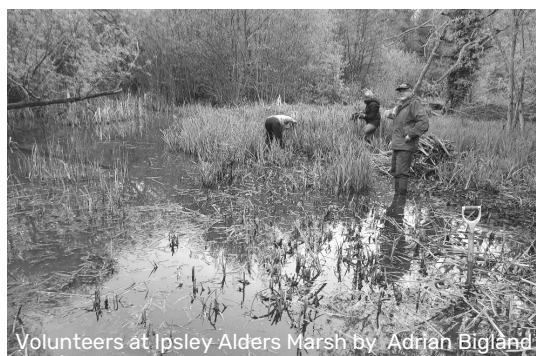
...you'll also find information about activities taking place across the county and don't forget that other local groups would be delighted to see you if you want to travel a little further afield.

We hope it won't be long before we see you so, until we do, enjoy the closing of summer and the arrival of autumn colours.

### Join us at Ipsley Alders Marsh

Ipsley Alders Marsh nature reserve is a wonderful spot at Winyates Green. Our friendly volunteer team, led by Margot Bish, meet once a month on a Sunday morning and undertake all sorts of tasks to help manage the habitat for wildlife. Mammals, birds, insects and flowers all thrive on the site.

If you'd like to get involved, call Margot on 01527 60004 or check the Trust's website for more information [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/volunteering-opportunities/practical-conservation-ipsley-alders-marsh](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/volunteering-opportunities/practical-conservation-ipsley-alders-marsh)



Volunteers at Ipsley Alders Marsh by Adrian Bigland

## Return of the blood-suckers

Every year, like clock-work at the end of June, the flat flower heads of ragwort, wild parsnip and hogweed are suddenly adorned with slender, blood-red beetles (often in tandem). In my youth these were known as blood-suckers because their colour was sure to mean they had an insatiable appetite for blood! The truth is not far from away; these beetles are indeed predators but are no threat to people. In fact, they are beneficial to us as their larvae live in the soil and in leaf litter where they feed on invertebrates including small slugs and snails. Then as adults they play their part in pollinating flowers.

It is their liking for umbellifer flowers and the fact that they are very often seen in tandem that has given rise to the modern name of the bonking-hogweed-beetle. Scientifically named *Rhagonycha fulva*, this colourful beetle belongs to a group known as the Cantharidae, or soldier beetles, and there are over 40 species known in Britain. They are generally brightly coloured, probably taking their group name from the days when soldiers dressed in bright colours. They range in size from the tiny *Malthodes minimus*, measuring just 3mm in length decorated with an orange collar and two bright yellow spots near the end of the body, to the very common *Cantharis rustica*, which can be 13mm long and displaying a black heart shape in the centre of its orange/red thorax.



These beetles can be found in areas where the grass is allowed to grow and flat-flowered flower species bloom. Areas of Morton Stanley Park, Arrow Valley Park or Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's (WWT) Ipsley Alders Marsh will all hold populations of these charismatic beetles.

Why not record your sightings to help us understand more about where soldier beetles live and the time of year they are around. You can send your records to Worcestershire Biological Records Centre or use online recording platforms such as iRecord. An easy way to record your sightings is to check out the Trust's sightings page at [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings) to see which species they are particularly interested in recording. The team behind the form, however, are keen to hear from anyone with photos of any species and will happily try to help you identify what you spot.

Gary Farmer