



Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

Southeast Worcestershire Local Group

Your local news, spring 2023

In your newsletter

It's goodbye from us...as the current committee steps aside, Harry Green, Chair of the Southeast Worcestershire Local Group looks back on the history of the group.

Can you help...are you looking for something different to get involved with? Would you love to share your love of wildlife with others? Take a look overleaf and see how you can get involved.

A very big thank you!

The Trust was founded in 1968. Your Southeast Worcestershire Local Group was founded in 1979. Just five years later the Trust acquired Tiddesley Wood, on the edge of Pershore, and it proved to be a nature reserve that has played a huge role in the work of the Local Group.

The founding meeting was held in Evesham and all Trust members and locals in the area were invited to attend. About 120 people turned up and about 20% were non-members. The attraction was a well-known film "Oisín" from Ireland, very beautiful with a soundtrack of bird song and nature, nearly ruined by an aged projector! Nevertheless, several people volunteered to join a committee to help run this new Local Group and several served for very many years thereafter.

We were first known as SEWLAG – Southeast Worcestershire Local Activity Group – and, like the Trust's other local groups, we were to promote the Trust and nature conservation, to help raise much-needed funds and to provide activities for local members that would help to get them involved with wildlife and the Trust.

At first we organised the usual things - special evening talks and outdoor natural history walks, indoor meetings in Pershore, Evesham and Broadway along with occasional events in various village halls. We held flag days, shaking tins on cold street corners in winter, organised huge jumble sales, even several auction sales of donated items. Outdoor local visits to interesting natural history sites were soon augmented with more distant adventures by minibus.

The purchase of Tiddesley Wood in 1984 saw the start of local volunteer work parties with enthusiastic coppicing, tree felling and bonfires. It was soon realised that the wood was carpeted with bluebells in spring so open days were advertised and visitors taken on guided walks in the wood. Soon the idea of a bigger open day was born, including stalls selling suitable goods and refreshments alongside the walks. This idea mushroomed into the Tiddesley Wood Open Days (TWOD) that became the major publicity day and fundraiser for the Trust, totally run and organised by volunteers in the group. The first TWOD was in 1986 and it ran until 2019. The pandemic stopped it in 2020 and, following this, the long-standing local organisers felt unable to pick up the strands again.



Another major long-term fundraiser organised by the group has been the sale of logs and woodchips. This started when the first forestry contractors processed timber in the wood, leaving behind a huge pile of woodchips. We realised these might be saleable and advertised a sale. They sold out! Piles of ride-side cord wood produced the idea of log sales. So a contractor cut the timber and local volunteers split the logs. A sale was advertised and local people arrived with cars and trucks to buy logs and chips from piles in the wood. A few years

later the Trust acquired an adjacent roadside field that including an old barn. The logs and chips business moved there and the sales organised and run by the local group raised funds for the Trust's conservation objectives. We even managed to keep running throughout the pandemic by strict organisation to avoid any risk of infection between customers and volunteers. However, the combination of Covid, a collapsing ancient barn, ageing volunteers and difficult economic conditions brought an end to log sales in February 2023 after about 35 years of hard work.

The group have also been actively involved in establishing a new plum orchard in the field adjacent to Tiddesley Wood and near the old orchard. This is primarily a conservation scheme to provide future house, home and food for rare noble chafer beetles when the ancient trees in the old orchard collapse. We've also planted a band of berry-bearing shrubs that connect the wood with the orchard as well as helped plant and maintain a group of trees to mark the Millennium Year 2000.

Towards the end of 2022 the group's committee members concluded that they did not feel able to return to organising indoor and outdoor events and Tiddesley Wood Open Days. That being so, and with the end of log sales in sight, your committee concluded that as far as they were concerned a change was needed. A small number of us would like to continue work on the orchard project as well as help with other things that are going on.

I have been Chair of the local group since its inception. It has been a wonderful time for me personally. Raising funds for conservation and all the practical work has been very rewarding. But the outstanding part has been, and still is, the people involved - the many volunteers and Trust staff I have known these last 55 years. Hundreds of people have helped SEWLAG often far beyond reasonable expectations, often to the point of exhaustion. Many have become my friends. Some have moved on. Some have passed away but in memory of them I keep their names in my address lists and we know of a tree or two that are theirs.

Thank you.

Harry Green

Can you help?

With the retirement of the Southeast Worcestershire Local Group committee, the Trust is looking for new people to help inspire people about wildlife and the Trust in your area.

We have eight local groups across the county who help to connect people to wildlife, whether that's by organising illustrated talks given by experts or taking people on guided walks in their local area or beyond. You don't need lots of wildlife knowledge but you're probably keen in helping others to love and appreciate nature just like you do.

What activities the Southeast Worcestershire Local Group organises will be up to you and your fellow committee members. You may choose to run a mixture of walks and talks or perhaps you'd rather focus on family activities or practical activities to help wildlife in gardens and green spaces. Perhaps you'd prefer to work with the Trust's other groups in organising bigger events across a larger area. Each group is different and may do a combination of different activities to suit the strengths of the committee members and/or the needs of the local area.

It's likely that you'd want a chairperson, treasurer, meetings organiser, minute taker and someone to organise teas and coffees at meetings but the structure of your new committee is down to you. Some of our committees do everything, well, by committee!

The fantastic group of volunteers who are stepping down from their current roles are willing to help you find your feet in the new group if you'd like them to. Of course, you'll also have the support of Trust staff too.

If you have a passion for wildlife and your local area, enjoy meeting people and want to help people to learn more about wildlife and how to stand up for nature, please get in touch.

You can find out more at

www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/volunteering-opportunities (search 'local group')

or contact Kate on 01905 754919
kate@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org
