



Worcestershire Wildlife Trust



Stourbridge & Hagley Local Group

Newsletter Summer 2023

Welcome to the summer newsletter

As I write it is mid-June and it has been very warm and dry for several weeks and the garden has been buzzing with life. The highlight recently, though, was not an insect but a badger on the trail camera set to record overnight. The first we have seen for over a year.

Stourbridge & Hagley local group programme August - December 2023

Walks

A walk through time along the Smestow

Wednesday August 2nd at 10.30 am

Join John Homer on a walk by the Smestow Brook and along the Staffs and Worcestershire canal, a rural area with a history dating back to Roman times. Meet at Ashwood Nurseries, Kingswinford (car park at the café and gift shop entrance). On our return there will, of course, be the opportunity to look round the award-winning garden centre and visit the tea room.

The nurseries are off the A449 along Ashwood Lower Lane OS Explorer Map 219 Grid Ref S0865878 Post Code DY6 OAE.

Talks

At St. Saviours Church Hall, Hagley.

22nd September at 7.30pm.

TBA

27th October at 7.30pm.

Green Farm: The creation of a nature reserve

a talk by Dominique Cragg (Western Reserves Officer).

24th November at 7.30pm.

Part 1. Biological recording and Part 2. An introduction to beetles talks by Gary Farmer.

For details of group events please visit the WWT website at www.worcestershirowildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on

Group Events

At our February meeting John Tilt gave an excellent talk on British orchids. John is the warden at Grafton Wood, which is jointly owned by WWT and Butterfly Conservation and is noted for its butterflies including the brown hairstreak. In March we welcomed Paul Wilkinson from the Canal & Rivers Trust whose talk on amphibians & reptiles in the UK was very well received. In April Roger Umpelby, another of our favourite speakers, gave a talk on local wildflowers to an audience of over 40 regulars and newcomers. All of the talks were very interesting, informative and illustrated with superb photographs.

Our first walk this year, on a very warm day in May, was to Highgate Common owned by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. The walk was led by SWT Senior Rangers Gary and Hayley. Our first stop was to look at sandy scrapes with steep sides

created for solitary bees to nest. Highgate is a nationally important site for solitary bees and wasps with over 140 species present.

As we walked, Gary and Hayley explained how the site is managed as they looked for bugs and beetles to show the group. The most interesting ones were the green tiger beetle and the black oil beetle. Highgate Common was, until recently, the only place in the Midlands where the black oil beetle was found but earlier this year they were spotted on Kinver Edge by the NT rangers. This was on the north end of the edge in Staffordshire but it is probably only a matter of time before they cross the border into Worcestershire so watch this space!



On the Highgate Common walk

Thanks to Gary and Hayley for leading the walk and showing such enthusiasm for Highgate and the wildlife that calls it home.

Our second walk was to Monkwood and Green Farm led by Dominique Cragg, the Trust's Western Reserves Officer. On another very hot day we walked along the main track through Monkwood seeing many of the successfully re-introduced wood white butterflies and evidence of the aspen leaf-rolling weevil. Dom told the group about the history of Monkwood and the management of the reserve since its purchase from L.G. Harris in the 1980s. At the north end of the reserve we entered the fields of Green Farm, purchased by the Trust in 2022. The fields are along the western side of Monkwood and will protect the current reserve and extend its area by 59 acres. Dom said that a comprehensive restoration plan for Green Farm is now in place and the meadows would be maintained to benefit species found at Monkwood and help them to spread into the new reserve. There is an ancient hedgerow dividing the new reserve; on the one side wildflower-rich meadows will be maintained, on the other side an orchard will be re-introduced and an area of wood pasture will be created. There is so much work to do here but Dom is so full of enthusiasm that I think that much will be achieved. The group walked back to the car park thankful for the shade in the wood.

Group donation to the Trust

At the end of March the local group committee was considering making its customary donation to the Trust. This is normally a cheque presented to a member of WWT staff or a Trustee at one of our evening meetings. Fortunately we learned of a Green Match Fund Campaign, which meant that our £500 donation would be matched by Big Give and become worth £1,000 to the Trust. There was a date limit on the Green Match Fund campaign so the donation was made without delay.

Ian Williams

Growing Up Green



The 'Growing Up Green' event this year took place from 10th – 18th June and our group involvement was with the Scarlet Tiger Project Walk along the Roman Road bridleway on 10th. The walk was organised and led by the Scarlet Tiger Project leader

Joy Stevens. It was another very warm day so we strolled along the Roman Road looking at the areas where the volunteer group had scattered seeds and put in plug plants, put up bird and bat boxes and planted native trees to fill in gaps in the hedgerow.

We saw no scarlet tiger moths during the walk but Joy saw one in her garden on the morning after the walk. There were a lot of scarlet tiger caterpillars on the green alkanet along the Roman Road in the spring so there should be many moths about at the end of June. Joy and Allan brought along moths from their overnight moth traps so there were plenty of moths to see, including an elephant hawk-moth.

Avril Williams

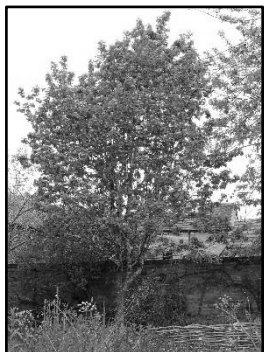
Looking back....to 1988

A day in the life of Sir David Attenborough

A unique day in the life of the Trust

On page two of the April 1988 Worcestershire Nature Conservation Trust magazine was the exciting news that Sir David Attenborough was to visit on 10th November "helping the Trust to raise badly needed funds and to spread the word about nature conservation in Worcestershire". The Trust HQ, in the path of the Droitwich Canal, was to be demolished and the County Council had offered a long lease on Lower Smite Farm for a new HQ. £100,000 was needed to make the building habitable and a lot more needed to make it into the conservation centre for the county.

The day began with an interview with Sir David at Lower Smite Farm for BBC Midlands Today to be shown that evening. It was then on to a sponsored business lunch at the Raven Hotel in Droitwich "to bring influential people from the business community in touch with the work of the Trust and hopefully enlist their help".



The wild service tree
in 2023

At 3.15 Sir David arrived back at Lower Smite Farm and planted a commemorative wild service tree. 100 guests had gathered in the barn for the Inauguration Ceremony hosted by Trust Chairman, Harry Green, and also to view the plans for the farm. After Harry's introduction Sir David spoke of the need for conservation, that it is not only important for the naturalist but a necessity for everyone so that all can see and enjoy the natural world in the future.

The Trust President
Christopher Cadbury and Mrs

Cadbury left with Sir David for tea and a brief rest before the evening event at 7.30. This was a talk by Sir David at Perdisswell Sports Centre. The talk was very well received by an audience of about 1,000 people. After the talk there was a book signing and then, to end his very busy day, Sir David

joined about 40 people for a "Continental Buffet Supper" and spent about an hour moving from table to table answering questions and chatting about his career.

The impact of this day and the contribution of Sir David Attenborough and everyone involved to make the day such a success can't be overestimated. The January 1989 magazine reported that £30,000 had already been received towards the Lower Smite Farm appeal.

Avril Williams

Penorcharad Meadows update

In March and April the volunteers completed the scrub clearance along the right of way at the bottom of the field adjacent to the reservoir and raked the debris from the areas of bramble that had been felled by a contractor. Around this time contractors refurbished the fence, dividing the two larger reservoir fields. A gate was also installed to allow pedestrian access between the two fields adjacent to the reservoir.



Mark what does it
say in your book?

The second April session involved raking the debris from some of the smaller areas of felled bramble and bracken and cutting back re-growth. It was good to find a large patch of moschatel in one of the smaller south Staffordshire fields.

A very warm June session involved a number of miscellaneous tasks e.g. clearing the right of way in Little Fox field, checking and repairing fences and a random botanical survey of the field next to the reservoir.

Many thanks to all the Penorcharad volunteers for your enthusiasm and hard work.

Ian Williams

Volunteer days at Penorcharad Meadows



Sue & Jackie clearing scrub to check the fence. Hard work
but there's still time for a joke!

Work parties are held on Mondays 10am – 3pm on
7th August 4th September 2nd October
6th November 4th December

Current volunteers will get an email giving details of our meeting place for each work party.

New volunteers should contact Andy Harris on
andyh@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org
Bring lunch and a drink for mid-morning and for
lunchtime if you are staying all day.