



# Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

## Stourbridge & Hagley Local Group

Newsletter April 2019



### CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW

#### February 2018 to January 2019

The year has been another successful one for the Group. Our new venue has proved to be a great improvement (with real cups and saucers for the refreshments). The purchase of a remote microphone system that links into the one installed in the hall has proved beneficial. With no time limit on the room, our evenings have had a more relaxed atmosphere with time for questions and discussions. We've also coped with slightly limited parking as some members park a short walk away.

#### Indoor Meetings

The year started with the Open Evening and AGM, which was really well attended and we enjoyed a variety of short presentations and a quiz. In February we welcomed the return of Paul Wilkinson from the Canal and Rivers Trust who gave us a most informative talk on the invasive species in waterways; the discussion afterwards was equally as enjoyable as Paul's talk. In March we welcomed a new speaker, John Medlock, who told us about Borneo, which he has toured extensively, and the problems faced by orang-utans. Wendy Carter from the Trust gave us an enjoyable talk in April on the varied wildlife of Worcestershire. We began the autumn with a well-attended talk by Wade Muggleton about veteran trees, which was followed by an interesting question and discussion session. Derek Crawley from Staffordshire Mammal Group told us in October about mammals that are making a welcome return to the UK. We rounded off the year with an excellent talk by Roger Umpelby on a year around his own patch, Bredon Hill.

#### Outdoor Meetings



Wendy's Droitwich Dawdle

Wendy Larmour again led our first walk of the year in May around the area of Droitwich Park. In June, in spite of the hot weather, a good number joined the Williams's who took us to see tigers along the Roman Road, whilst in July

Rosemary Winnall showed us the invertebrate life in her local patch, the Wyre Forest. Finally in September I led a well-attended walk around the Dudmaston Estate following in the footsteps of the last owner.

#### Promotion of our Trust

There was no Kinver Country Fayre in 2018 and despite our best efforts we were unable to find a suitable event in the Hagley area to attend to promote the Trust.

Our attendance at Trust-organised meetings has enabled contact to be maintained with other local groups and headquarters staff.

#### Local Reserves

This year our team of enthusiastic volunteers have concentrated their efforts on Penorchard nature reserve with rewarding results.

Finally I'd like to thank once again my fellow committee members for all their hard work with a special mention for Dave Edwards who stepped down from the committee during the year.

*John Homer*

### GARDENWATCH 2019

A group of around 20 members have 'signed up' to monitor the bugs, birds and beasties in their gardens during 2019. The gardens are widely spaced around our area so it will be interesting to see what turns up. It depends, of course, on the location and what we provide in the way of food, water and shelter; I will need to produce a simple questionnaire to find this out. At the end of the year I will gather all the results and produce a list of species linked to what we have provided for the wildlife in our gardens. I think that we will all have found something new, learned a lot and maybe found something rare. I hope that some of the records can be sent to the county Biological Records Centres, most to Worcestershire, possibly some to Staffordshire.



Hairy shieldbug

*Avril Williams*

## MAGPIES (Part one)

### ONE FOR SORROW.....

As I noted down the number of magpies I saw for the WWT Gardenwatch 2019 I realised that I was muttering, a rhyme which I have recited ever since childhood on seeing these birds.

*One for sorrow, Two for joy, Three for a letter, Four for a boy, Five for a wish, Six for a kiss, Seven for silver, Eight for gold, Nine for a secret yet untold.*

There are a number of variations of this rhyme but they all begin in the same negative way.

It was not long ago that I was out walking with a friend and chatting when, mid-sentence, she saluted and said politely, "Good morning Mr Magpie. How are you today and how are your wife and children?" She had seen a lone magpie. When I asked why she had done this she said it was to avoid bad luck and that you should always do so if you saw a lone bird, the inference being that there was more than one magpie in the vicinity and that it was only seeing a single magpie that was inauspicious.

My interest piqued, I did some research and found that these traditions have distant origins. In folklore it is said that the magpie was the only bird to refuse to enter the Ark and instead perched on top jeering as the world sank under water. Another story is that the magpie was the only bird not to sing to comfort Christ on the cross. In Scotland a magpie, flying past the window, is thought to presage Death. Shakespeare links them to murder in Macbeth:

*"Augurs and understood relations have  
By maggot-pies and choughs and rooks brought  
forth the secret'st man of blood"*

Here Macbeth suggests that magpies can uncover foul deeds.

Why do they get such a bad press? Certainly it might be that they are 'carrion' birds and so linked to death and, of course, they are despised by gamekeepers and farmers as they are known to take eggs and young birds. I find their strutting presence a little intimidating. On the other hand they are undoubtedly handsome if somewhat raucous. They also have a reputation for collecting shiny objects hence Rossini's opera 'The Thieving Magpie', although recent studies show that they are actually nervous of glittery things. As to why a solitary magpie should cause us to react as we do, perhaps it is because they mate for life and a lone bird is out of the ordinary and linked with death.

Of course it is not all bad; in East Asian culture the magpie is seen as a symbol of good fortune and features in many Chinese paintings and poems!

*Wendy Wilkins*

## LOOKING BACK ..... to 1987

I'm a bit of a hoarder and have kept every WWT magazine since I joined the Trust in 1987. Of course, back then it was WNCT (Worcestershire Nature Conservation Trust); the current name was not adopted until 1994. There were, as now, three magazines a year but with very few photographs and many superb drawings. It is interesting to look back and I have picked out a few items that will, I hope, be of interest to everyone:

- Household membership was £10 per annum.
- In 1986 Stourbridge Local Group donated £485 to the Trust for conservation work in the county.
- 106.5 acres of Trench Wood were purchased for £85,000 plus expenses with financial help from several groups, charities and individuals.
- In October 1986 a pectoral sandpiper and yellow-browed warbler were seen at Upton Warren.
- Autumn/winter of 1986 brought large numbers of long-eared owls to Britain, a few were spotted in Worcestershire.
- Our Director, Colin Raven, joined the staff of the Trust on 19<sup>th</sup> January 1987 as Conservation Officer for reserves.
- A wildlife & nature photography course was advertised with evening sessions and day workshops. Two of the expert tutors, Gordon Forrest and Mike Wilkes, are well known to our group.
- The official opening of Monkwood was on June 13<sup>th</sup> 1987. The cover photograph on the September magazine shows Gordon Beningfield, artist and Vice President of BBCS (British Butterfly Conservation Society), opening the reserve watched by Harry Green, Trust Chairman and John Tatham, Chairman of BBCS.

*Avril Williams*

### NEW DATE FOR YOUR DIARY Ashwood wildlife meadow

The walk at Ashwood Nurseries led by Tom Woodhall will be on Sunday June 30<sup>th</sup> at 11am.

### Volunteer days at Penorchard Meadows

Work parties are held on Mondays 10am – 3pm

Meet at St. Kenelm's Church car park on  
April 1<sup>st</sup>                      May 13<sup>th</sup>  
June 3<sup>rd</sup>                      July 1<sup>st</sup>                      August 5<sup>th</sup>

Bring lunch and a drink for mid-morning and lunchtime if you are staying all day.