

WILD Times



Worcestershire

The newsletter for Worcestershire Wildlife Trust volunteers

December 2011



This Issue: Bigger and Better Than Ever!

- Exciting News for The Devil's Spittleful
- Taster Days in 2012
- Help Our South Birmingham Local Group

Protecting wildlife for the future

Introduction

Hello everyone and welcome to the winter 2011/2012 edition of WildTimes!

Firstly, I would like to thank all the volunteers for their hard work over the last few months - in the heat and in the cold and wet!

Also, a big thank you to all of you that attended the volunteers' conference in September at Feckenham, and I hope you all enjoyed yourself. It was a fantastic day with lots of interesting speakers and a lovely walk around Feckenham Wylde Moor - and we were lucky with the weather.

I'm excited to announce a new work party on the Devil's Spittleful, which will be starting on Saturday 21st January, and will then run on the third Saturday of every month. This will be a chance to undertake some vital work on the precious heathland. If you are interested in attending this work party, please let me know.

We also have a number of practical conservation taster days in 2012, so please circulate these dates to family and friends who might be interested, or to anyone that is stuck for a new year's resolution!

If you have received this by post, and would prefer it by email, please let me know and help us save paper and postage.

Wishing you all a very merry Christmas and New Year!

Anna Bunney

Volunteer Co-ordinator /
Conservation Assistant

anna@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org



Sold in aid of Wildlife Conservation

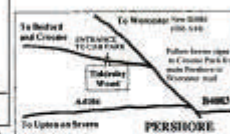
Log & wood chip sales

Tiddesley Wood near Pershore

Sat & Sun 22nd & 23rd October 11
Sat & Sun 26th & 27th November 11
Sat & Sun 7th & 8th January 12
Sat & Sun 11th & 12th February 12
Sat & Sun 10th March & 11th March 12
10 am to 1 pm each day

Logs £4.50 a bag
Quantity cheaper without bags - £85 per cu metre loaded
loose into trailers, car boots etc,
any amount big or small!
Chips £3 a bag - quantity discount.

All wood certified
To find the sale follow main road out of Pershore towards Worcester. Turn left at top of Allesborough Hill following signposts to Besford & Croome. After about 500 yards look for signs.



WildTimes will get you near for those with sat navs!

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

Lower Smite Farm, Lower Hill, Huddip, Worcester, WR1 8JZ tel 01905 754919 charity no 256518 company no 626544

**There is still time to buy your
Christmas cards from us!**



**Christmas
Cards**
£3.50 for a
pack of 10

**Call us on
01905 754919
or visit us at
Lower Smite
Farm**

Front cover: Coal tit in winter at Feckenham Wylde Moor reserve by Peter Preece. As featured in the 2012 calendar, on sale now for £6.50.

Events & Volunteering Opportunities

South Birmingham Local Group

Urgent plea for new volunteers

Without new volunteers, this local group will cease to run after April 2012. If you live in the area and can spend even just a few hours a month to help, please do get in touch with us. There are over 700 member households in the 'South Birmingham' area and it would be a huge loss not to have a volunteer group representing the Trust. Call Wendy on 01905 754919 if you think you can help.

Smite Spring Open Day

Sunday 1st April

Volunteer needed to help at this annual fun-filled open day.

Duties can include refreshments, car parking wardens, family craft activities, sales stalls and more.

Call Debs on 01905 754919 now!

Courses in 2012

The programme of wildlife courses for adults will be advertised in December's members magazine, giving members priority booking. All details will go onto the main Trust website mid-January.

Practical Conservation Taster Days!

**Wednesday 25th January
Broadway Gravel Pit**

**Sunday 11th March
Tiddesley Wood Taster Day**

**Thursday 15th March
Roving Volunteers
Bishop's Field**

**To reserve your FREE place
please call Anna on
01905 754919**

Volunteering for Singles

Our 5th practical conservation event just for single people will take place at Tiddesley Wood reserve on 12th February 2012.

Once again, places are FREE but limited, so booking is essential. Tea and cakes provided as always.

Tiddesley Wood is located close to Pershore.

To book your place just contact Anna on 01905 754919.

Local Group Events this Winter

January

- 4 Wed 7.30pm (T) Wild Shetlands by Rosemary Morris and Bas Yates **Bromsgrove**
5 Thurs 7.30pm (T) Flora of the Malverns by Rob Havard of Malvern Hills Conservators **Malvern**
8 Sun 10am (W) Kingsford Forest Park and Castle Hill led by David Howell. Meet at car park off Kingsford Lane between Wolverley and Kinver. SO824820 **Wyre Forest**
13 Fri 7.30pm (T) In Patagonia by Roger Butler **South Birm**
18 Wed 7.30pm (T) Namibia by Peter Beckhelling **Redditch**
21 Sat (W) Newport Wetlands day trip. Contact group for details **Redditch**
23 Mon 10am (W) Bird watching and guided walk at Upton Warren led by warden Arthur Jacobs. Meet at the Moors Pool Car Park (SO 938675) for a 2-3 hour visit. Bring binoculars/scopes. Numbers limited so please contact Pauline on 01905 352423 or Brian on 01684 565994. **Malvern**
27 Fri 7.30pm (T) Members' Evening **Stourbridge**

February

- 1 Wed 7.30pm (T) India – On the Trail of the Tiger by Gary Farmer **Bromsgrove**
1 Wed 7.30pm (T) Garden Plants for Wildlife by Howard Drury **Worcester**
2 Thurs 7.30pm (T) Madagascar Journey – the unique & rare wildlife of the island by Phred Newbury **Malvern**
2 Thurs 7.30pm (T) Wildlife of the Teme Valley with Danny Arnold **Wyre Forest**
10 Fri 7.30pm (T) Hidden Places, Secret Lives by Rosemary Winnall **South Birm**
12 Sun 10am (W) Winter into Spring at Shrawley. 4 mile/ 3 hour walk with rest stop led by Wenda Janes. Meet 10am in lay-by near Lenchford Inn on B4196. SO813642. **Wyre Forest**
12 Sun 9.30am (W) Valentines Volunteers at Tiddesley Wood. Booking essential on 01905 754919. **WWT**
16 Thurs 7.30pm (T) Reptiles of Worcestershire by Alan Shepherd. In Evesham. **SE Worcs**
18 Sat 9.30am (W) Looking for signs of spring with Garth Lowe. Meet at the Knapp car park (GR 750521) for a 2-3 hour walk towards Malvern. For info contact Pauline on 01905 352423 or Brian on 01684 565994. **Malvern**
18 Sat (W) Carsington Water day trip. Contact group for details **Redditch**
24 Fri 7.30pm (T) Highlights of a New Nature Reserve by Gordon Forrest **Stourbridge**

March

- 1 Thurs 7.30pm (T) The Conservation Garden by Rachel Salisbury **Malvern**
1 Thurs 7.30pm (T) Living with Swifts by Swift Conservation **Wyre Forest**
7 Wed 7.30pm (T) Wildlife of the Cloud Forest & Galapagos Islands by Mike Wilkes **Bromsgrove**
7 Wed 7.30pm (T) Spring Flowers of Sardinia by Dr Tony Hughes **Worcester**
9 Fri 7.30pm (T) Wildlife of Florida by Peter Shirley **South Birm**
11 Sun 10am (W) Wolverley Wander Walk with local resident Rosemary Hatton. Meet 10am at The Lock Inn car park on B4189. SO831792. **Wyre Forest**
13 Tues 7.30pm (T) Cloud Forest and Galapagos Islands by Mike Wilkes. In Pershore. **SE Worcs**
21 Wed 7.30pm (T) British Orchids by Tony Hughes **Redditch**
24 Sat (W) Pitsford day trip. Contact group for details **Redditch**
29 Thurs 7.30pm (T) (NOT April 5th) Wetlands Creation and Conservation by Rob Allen, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Reserves Officer **Malvern**
30 Fri 7.30pm (T) Wayside Flowers by Roy Mantle **Stourbridge**

Bromsgrove - Gordon Forrest 07885 632964

Admission £2. Bournheath Village Hall, Claypit Lane, Bournheath, Bromsgrove, B61 9LA

Droitwich - John Holder 01905 794854

Admission £2. Droitwich Methodist Church, Worcester Road, Droitwich. WR9 8AN

Malvern - Margaret Vernon 01684 565079 or Pauline Ranson 07972 498889

Admission £2. Chase School, Sixth Form Annexe, Geraldine Close, off Geraldine road, Malvern. WR14 3PF

Redditch - Barry Jones 01527 520659

Admission £2. Peace Hall, Rowney Green Lane, Rowney Green, Alvechurch, B48 7GP

South Birmingham - Sylvia Davies 0121 243 9190

Admission £2. (Children 75p) The Dame Elizabeth Hall, Oak Tree Lane, Bourneville. B30 1TU

South East Worcestershire - Harry Green 01386 710377

Admission £2. St Wulstans Hall, Priest Lane, Pershore. WR10 1EB or Friends Meeting House, Cowl St, Evesham, WR11 4PL

Stourbridge - John Homer 01384 277800 or Avril Williams 01384 371064

Admission £2. The Eco Centre, Ridgewood High School, Park Road West, Wollaston, Stourbridge, DY8 3NQ

Worcester - Contact Sandra on 01905 863394. Admission £2. Nunnery Wood High School, Spetchley Road, Worcester, WR5 2LT.

Wyre Forest - Richard Cory 01299 822748. Admission £2. Holy Innocents Community Hall, Foley Park, Kidderminster, DY11 7BD

News

Hi everyone,

I just wanted to say a big thank you to all of you for making the past 3 1/2 years at Worcestershire Wildlife Trust such an enjoyable experience for me. Meeting and getting to know so many of you has been a pleasure and I have some great memories of working alongside you to take away with me. The Trust are very lucky to have such a friendly, committed and reliable team of 400+ volunteers supporting them.

I am going to work for The National Trust in the Peak District, based at Ilam Hall, so if you are ever up there you will find me near the visitor centre, organising family and community engagement events. There's a nice cafe there..

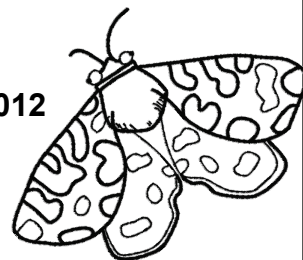
Goodbye and best wishes,

Zoë Stevens
Community Officer.



National Moth Recorders' Meeting

The date for the second National Moth Recorders' Meeting is **January 28th 2012** at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, central Birmingham.



The programme for the day has been drawn up and the line up features both amateur moth recorders and academic researchers. We are really pleased to have Professor Gareth Jones from the 'Batlab' at Bristol University speaking about how bats and moths try to out-wit one another in their predator/prey relationship. The draft programme for the day is available on the Moths Count website (www.mothscount.org).

This year there is a £5 (per person) registration fee for attendees. This includes morning and afternoon tea/coffee and a buffet lunch all subsidised from Butterfly Conservation budgets. It has been necessary to impose a charge this year as we no longer have Heritage Lottery Funding to cover holding such an event.

Advanced booking is essential, to book your place please contact info@butterfly-conservation.org or telephone 01929 400209. We hope to see you there.

There's still time to bid for Valerie Briggs' painting of Tiddesley Wood and its wildlife. Valerie has generously donated the painting to help raise funds for our work.

If you'd love the painting hanging on your wall please send your bid to Sian Bakewell, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Lower Smite Farm, Smite Hill, Hindlip, Worcester, WR3 8SZ or email **silent-bid@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org**

There is a reserve price on the painting and the auction will close at 9am on 16th January.

Colin's Column - News on the Trust

The Volunteers' Conference held during September was very interesting and inspiring. The focus was around the historic mediaeval Forest of Feckenham, now one of the Trust's priority Living Landscape areas. We met in Feckenham itself and heard a variety of speakers including two from outside the Trust: from the village shop at Feckenham, that has been open since January 2009 and stocks a wide range of everyday groceries as well as many locally produced foods, and which is entirely run by and for the community; and the Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service who provided a fascinating insight into the history of the Forest and how today's landscape is still heavily influenced by it.

In the afternoon a visit to the nearby reserve at Feckenham Wild Moor was offered. Particular thanks are due to everyone who attended and contributed to the event, and especially to Anna and the rest of the team who helped organise a very good conference.

During October the Trust held its AGM. As well as the formal business of Annual Reports, Annual Accounts and appointment of auditors, the AGM also provides an opportunity to celebrate volunteering within the Trust as it was here that presentations of the Worcestershire Wildlife Medal (to Rosemary Winnall in recognition of her work in the Wyre Forest and beyond), and a number of Wild Service Awards to a selection of outstanding volunteers from across the Trust's work. We are always keen to receive nominations so if you have any suggestions for the awards in 2012 please let me know.

You will probably be aware from articles in the Trust magazine that 2012 is the centenary of the foundation of The Wildlife Trusts (originally founded as the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves). We shall be organising a number of events and activities locally as part of this and have contributed to a chapter of The Wildlife Trust centenary book that will be published next year, which includes, among other things, a potted history of every Trust in the country.

As we move into our second century we have been reviewing our forward plans at national and local levels, and I am pleased to say that volunteering will remain central to our work for the next hundred years.

Finally it is time to say a sad goodbye to Zoe Stevens who has provided support for hundreds of volunteers over the last few years as our Community Officer. Zoe is moving to work with the National Trust in her native Derbyshire and I am sure that everyone who knows her will join me in thanking her and wishing her well. We are currently recruiting to a new part-time post of Communications Assistant so the volunteer support element of Zoe's work will continue.

Colin Raven
Director



News from the Nature Reserves

Northern Reserves:

Upton Warren

At the time of writing the old Avocet hide has just been dismantled. In good time as the timbers were starting to rot. The new Avocet hide is being constructed and will soon be open. On the first day, while work was going on, even without binoculars, I saw two little egrets, a large flock of lapwings and as I walked back along the boardwalk lots of bullfinches. Under the old hide was years of accumulated debris testament to the hard work of the Upton Warren volunteers. Wheel barrows and mowers that had once wheeled gravel to the islands, but had reached the end of their lives and now slowly decayed. We have been making other improvements to paths and hides on the reserve and have just submitted the site to go into the new Higher Level Stewardship scheme. This will help fund conservation work on site such as thinning the woodland, restoring reed beds and pools as well as for fencing and pollarding. Next year we will replace the Bittern hide and we hope to raise more money to improve the paths at the Flashes.

Wilden Marsh

Half of the marsh restoration work that involves tree clearance will be completed this winter, with much already done to date. This has included coppicing half of the trees along the River Stour, removing $\frac{3}{4}$ of the trees in the orchid field and coppicing the trees within the woodland that shade the Hillary Road field. Next winter we will restore the swamp and Hillary road areas.

Devil's Spittleful

The major restoration works will start in January, and will involve felling up to 90% of the young secondary woodland to restore it as heath. The heath is incredibly important to restore as so much has been lost in Worcestershire, and even what remains on our own site is fragmented. We are retaining old trees and the best patches of woodland. Our aim is to have a mosaic of habitat, but primarily heathland with a mix of grass, heather, scrub of all ages and trees of all ages.

Andy Harris - Northern Reserves Officer

Central Reserves:

In my last round-up I boldly stated that the work on the Grafton conifers would be finished by September, well, I was half right. The felling and forwarding had finished but there was still rather a lot of timber on the neighbour's field and the brash had not been burnt up. Writing this in November, we are now down to just two loads of timber needing to be moved and the brash is all piled up and ready to be burnt, so we are tantalisingly close to the end. The management committee all got together at the end of October to discuss future management so we have already laid out the plans for rides and scallops through what will be uneven aged mixed broadleaved woodland managed through selective felling.

Away from Grafton but staying on a woodland theme, the volunteers have been working hard in Monkwood and Trench Wood clearing ride-sides and preparing a few areas for this winters forthcoming forestry work. Contractors will be working in both woodlands this winter widening rides and carrying out some thinning. At Monkwood, we will be clearing east from the car park, along the roadside, partly to prevent the trees from becoming too large but also to help reduce some of the dense beech that grows in this compartment. At Trench Wood we will be re-visiting an area that we thinned in 2009 to remove some large seed bearing sycamore. Sycamore was planted by previous owners in Trench Wood, as it is a fast growing clean white wood that is popular with foresters, and some areas have been dominated by it in the past. Thinning has helped reduce the overall level but we are still getting a lot of re-generation so are now trying to remove more of the seed source trees so will be carrying out treatment of the cut stumps with herbicide.

Over at Penny Hill Bank the WCV have been busy, teaming up with some volunteers from Butterfly Conservation, coppicing the woodland at the top of the hill to allow some "communication" between our grassland and the habitat that has developed on top of the old landfill – this was capped and then seeded using green hay from the Reserve, so it is pleasing to see how it has developed. This

News from the Nature Reserves

should help scarce butterflies such as the dingy skipper and the green hairstreak along with the thriving slow worm population and maybe even the glow worms too.

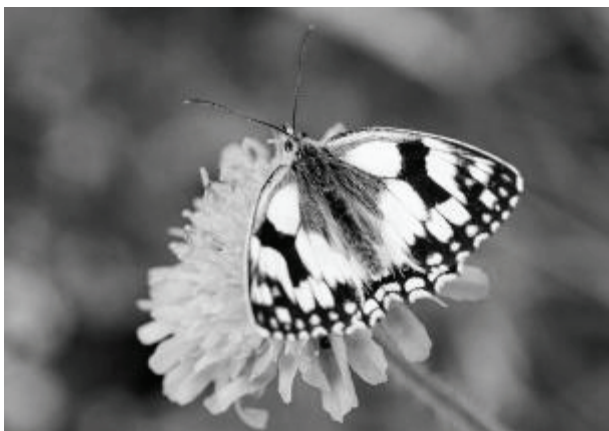


Photo credit Paul Lane

As always this is just a scratch on the surface as to all that has been happening on the Central Reserves and I once again express my thanks for all of your hard work in managing the reserves, it is much appreciated.

James Hitchcock - Central Reserves Officer

Southern Reserves:

November has brought a change in the weather, with some much needed rain, and I am gratefully looking to see some water appearing on Hill Court Farm in time for avian winter visitors. Indications are that this year's very dry weather has had a negative impact on breeding wader success on wet grassland sites throughout Worcestershire where we cannot control the water supply. Happily, at the Gwen Finch wetlands we are able to pump water into our scrapes so we seem to have maintained most of our breeding species. One year doesn't make a trend of course, and next year we will hopefully see some different results.

Also at Hill Court Farm, we are in the process of putting in a screened access track to allow visitors to reach a viewing screen between the first two fields. The hedges will hopefully be planted by the end of January, so the intent will be to allow visitors on site after that. However, if you are thinking of taking a look around then, please give me a call first to check the track has been opened to save a wasted visit. Look at

our next edition of WildTimes for details of an Autumn taster day at Hill Court Farm.

Other positive news, our butterfly surveyor at Melrose Farm and the Brotheridge Green disused railway line has recorded a substantial increase in butterfly numbers after two winters of heavy scrub clearance by our volunteers, particularly of grassland species. Well done to all who helped in the work on both these sites, your efforts have been very fruitful. A report by a local farmer of glowworms in a neighbouring field may also mean that we will see a return of these insects to the rejuvenated site.

Other interesting work this autumn and winter has included our first attempt at reed cutting at Gwen Finch. A small section was cut this year to remove the build up of fallen leaves slowing the silting up and succession of the reed beds on this wetland reserve. We shall monitor the results and regrowth of reed next year to see if this is a successful management technique for the site.



Finally, with winter here the log sales have begun at Tiddesley wood, and the volunteers have reported a good response from the log-buying public, and may it continue over the whole winter period. The profits from the log sales come to the Trust, so a big thanks to the Tiddesley volunteers who make them such a success. On Sunday 6th May, we will have our annual open day at Tiddesley Wood.

Rob Allen - Southern Reserves Officer

Farming Volunteers

Since my last report, the Hereford cattle have moved into Windmill Field and have happily settled in thus reducing our need to hone our fencing skills. However life on the farm still continues and we are using our weeding skills to try and keep on top of a variety of voracious weeds. As we are organic on the farm we have used the tried and tested method of eradication by hand. A lengthy and at times exhausting work but rewarding when for a short time at least we are on top and cleared areas of ground appear.

We continued to obtain loads of chippings from Tiddesley Wood and green manure from the refuse re-cycling plant at Throckmorton and as a result are building up fertility levels on parts of the farm as well as providing essential mulching to young and vulnerable plants (and assorted woodland mushrooms are springing up all over the place!). Oaktree Field is transforming. A scheme for soft fruit planting has been drawn and indeed planting of



some 500 strawberry plants 220 white and black currant bushes 40 jostaberry and 100 raspberry canes. The object of this exercise is mainly to provide a range of habitat and

feeding for a variety of wildlife including birds, small mammals and insects with the bonus of any leftovers for human consumption. Here's to a Pimms and strawberry next summer. Additionally there may be more planting of soft fruit in the spring. To finish off this scheme we have also planted a new hedgerow of damson suckers (hopefully they are damson!) relocated from various parts of the farm (see photo inset). This will help toward replacement of hedgerows previously removed and create shelter for the soft fruit. To fully complete the fruit picture a small damson orchard is being created adjoining the new damson hedgerow. Full details on this fruit scheme will be given in our next edition.

As usual at this time of year we are planning for the months ahead and with provision of bird boxes, new hedgerows, extension to lavender bed, more beehives and work associated therewith as one can see we will be busy! Still it will keep some of the group out of mischief and for once gainfully employed. Our Tuesday roving colleagues again provided valuable assistance in carrying out a number of the tasks. Indeed last Tuesday we set a

record when 23 volunteers were present and correct.

Needless to say I needed help on the above and thanks to our leader Caroline for her help.

Happy volunteering to one and all.

Tony Ellis (farming volunteer)

Knapp centre rises

What started as several falling down buildings has risen as a new Education and Conservation Centre at the Knapp and Papermill nature reserve.

Constructed by a local building contractor, the Centre has a room large enough to accommodate 20-30 people, a good size for a group of visitors wanting to learn more about the reserve, attend one of our natural history training courses or a local community group to use. The room and 2 extra toilets will be used by one of the many schools who go to the reserve with our education officer Debs Bull for outside learning, something so few children get the opportunity to do these days. No matter what the weather there will be somewhere dry; this will help with planning coursework, school bookings and children's holiday clubs now there is another Trust venue with a meeting room on a reserve with a wide range of habitats and species to explore.

Our nature reserve conservation volunteers have a new workshop, connected to water and electricity, it is a dry place to store and repair tools and machinery and plan a busy day on the reserve.

Plus we have increased the potential wildlife value of the building by making the entire roof space and a hidden wall space into a bat loft for lesser horseshoe bats, this includes a warm-box which we hope will become a maternity roost for the bat. To reduce our use of clean water a rainwater harvesting system supplies water to flush the toilets, and any surplus rainwater will overflow into the pond. Hibernacula for newts have been constructed.

We will be opening the Centre for the Open Day next April but if you are interested in hiring the room please call me at the Trust and I can talk over



arrangements.
Helen Woodman
Reserves Team
Leader

Exciting News!

WARDENING and NEW WORK PARTY

The Devils Spittleful is a truly fantastic reserve and there is so much to gain by working out there. The heathland needs regular wardening. This will help to keep on top of the weeds such as broom and silver birch that can invade and take over, provide opportunities to talk to the visitors and help them enjoy the site more, and deal with all manner of interesting challenges as they arise. E.g. mending a fence to stop the cattle escaping, or helping to find the cattle if they've got out!! To top it all none of our sites can rival having steam trains pass by and rhinos stomping near by.



Photo credit Justin Heath

After the restoration work we will have 24 hectares of heath to maintain and small areas of woodland to manage. The rock and cave, which will be more prominent in the landscape, and Blackstone fields also need maintaining. In effect we will have three times as much work to do as a year ago!! We really need to get more work parties going and we would like to find keen volunteers to help, and maybe even volunteers to warden the site.

Ideally I'd like to find a volunteer that could be appointed Reserve Manager one day. WWT is always willing to train keen volunteers if they can commit to helping us in the future. Until then WWT staff and experienced volunteers will run the group.

To this end we will be running work parties on the third Saturday of every month.

The first work party will be on Saturday 21st January!

Wardening work could include any of the following depending on your own interests:

- Fence and gate repairs
- Path clearance
- Monitoring the heath and key species such as stonechat, lizard and mining bees
- Clearing weed species e.g. ragwort
- Running work parties to clear scrub
- Checking the cattle
- Encouraging dog walkers to keep dogs under control
- Hedge maintenance
- Leading guided walks and helping at events on site
- Clearing litter
- Liaising with the west midland safari park/ district council rangers who also manage parts of the SSSI



The 1st work party (on the 21st January) will be a special wardens taster day that will include a variety practical work, a walk around looking at how the reserve is managed and discussing wardening issues.

This taster day will run from 9am - 1pm. We will be meeting under the Severn Valley Railway Bridge on the Devil's Spittleful (if walking from Blackstone car park, this is the second bridge you pass under).

Please contact Anna or Andy if you are interested on 01905 754919.

Bird Notes by Steve Bloomfield

Winter drawers on...

Looking out on a drizzly, cold day it feels as though winter's finally here; a fact reflected by the paucity of recent records in my notebook. Going back a couple of months the dry, settled weather of autumn meant that summer migrants filtered away almost unnoticed, though the farm did pick up 4 more wheatears, a lone whinchat and yet another tree pipit (!) before September played itself out. Late autumn interest was limited, the sole highlight being farm's 4th Green Sandpiper flying over on October 25th.

Winter thrush arrival opened with a flock of 9 redwings over on the 17th of October with the first fieldfare following 2 days later. Skylarks and meadow pipits continue to be rather thin on the ground but the finch flocks rapidly increased as October turned into November. Good numbers are now being seen daily with well into three-figure counts of greenfinches and goldfinches. Chaffinches and linnets have also become more numerous, their ranks swelled by a scattering of siskins and redpoll. Notable counts for the latter species included a flock of 21 in the car park in late September.

Unsurprisingly the wetlands on the farm have struggled in the dry weather and all the ponds remain well below their usual level. Nonetheless the kingfisher brightened up the main orchard pond a couple of times in October and a pair of snipe put in an early appearance too. These though were flushed from the middle of a pretty desiccated arable field, perhaps reflecting the limited damp ground available elsewhere. A couple of peregrine records and the first little owl of the year complete the autumn roundup.

With several scarce wildfowl already reported in Worcestershire (and a smart adult red-throated diver on the River Severn as I type - the first since 1997) I wonder what the winter will bring. There are already plenty of waxwings arriving in the UK so watch this space... and any berry-laden trees near you!

Steve Bloomfield

Reserve work tasks

Why not try out practical work on your local reserve?

Chaddesley Woods: Every Thursday and the 3rd Sunday of the month at 10.00am.

Devil's Spittlefull: 3rd Saturday of the month (from January 21st 2012 at 9.00am) and the 4th Thursday of the month at 10.00am.

Droitwich Woods: 3rd Sunday of the month at 2.30pm.

Feckenham Wylde Moor: Every Wednesday at 10.00am.

Grafton Wood: Every Wednesday and the 2nd Sunday of the month at 10.00am.

Ipsley Alders: 1st Sunday of the month at 10.00am.

Knapp & Papermill: Every Thursday (10.00am) and the 2nd Sunday of the month (10.30am).

Lower Smite Farm: Every Tuesday at 9.00am.

Monkwood: 1st Sunday of the month at 10.00am. (3rd Sunday of month in January 2012)

Pen Orchard: 1st Monday of every month except for Bank Holidays at 10.00am.

Piper's Hill: 4th Sunday of the month at 10.30am.

South Birmingham: 2nd Sunday of the month. At 10.00am

Tiddesley Wood: Last Sunday of the month at 10.00am.

Trench Wood: 4th Sunday of the month at 10.00am.

Upton Warren: Every Tuesday (9.00am) & 1st Sunday of the month (10.00am).

Wilden Marsh: 1st Thursday of the month at 10.00am.

The **Roving Volunteers** and the **Worcestershire Conservation Volunteers** travel across the county to different reserves each week. The Roving Volunteers meet at Lower Smite Farm every Tuesday and Thursday and the Worcestershire Conservation Volunteers meet at reserves every Sunday except the 1st Sunday of the month.

If you are interested in joining any of the groups or would like some more information please contact Anna on 01905 754 919 or email anna@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org

An Interview with...

Laura Thomson

Laura is our Finance and Admin Assistant based at Lower Smite Farm

What does your Role at the Trust involve?

Where do I start?! The administration side of the office work including producing letters, forms, mailing out publicity for the Tiddesley Wood log sales, council meeting papers. I am charged with keeping records up to date for all of our contacts, Trust vehicle bookings, internal room bookings and the Health and Safety database of contractors used by the Trust. I also organise the First Aid supplies and courses for staff and volunteers. I work part time for the Consultancy, working alongside Ruth Hargreaves to process finance and admin paperwork. I am always kept busy here, and have even helped out by serving cakes and washing pots when we have had rather large commercial bookings in the barn and stables at Smite.

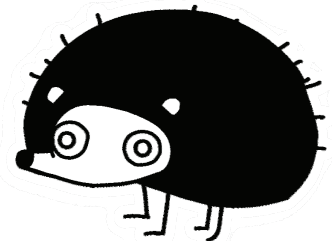


Who do you liaise with through your role?

I liaise and meet with the majority of people at Lower Smite Farm – Trust staff, Consultancy staff, WBRC staff & some of our volunteers including the team of volunteer receptionists. I also meet members of the public who come into the reception at Lower Smite Farm, with enquiries, deliveries or to become a Trust member.

What is your favourite Worcestershire Species?

Hedgehogs! I have quite a few around my house but not real ones in the garden any more unfortunately. I used to have them visit my garden but with neighbours' fences replacing lovely hedges, it has restricted their access. I enjoyed attending the hedgehogs course held at Lower Smite Farm in May!



Which is your favourite Worcestershire Wildlife Trust nature reserve?

This has to be Pipers Hill near Hanbury. When we were growing up (in the 70's!), my mum & dad used to take me & my four brothers to 'Hanbury Woods' often – it was free! The autumn was obviously the best time, walking on lovely crunchy leaves & this has always remained my favourite time of the year. It had good trees for climbing but I'd probably get into trouble for that now!

Exciting Lichens

At our lichens course in November, at Tiddesley Wood Orchard the participants discovered a lovely pink *lichenicolous* fungi [fungi that grows on lichens] growing on *Physcia tenella*. It was *Illosporopsis christianseii*--almost certainly a new species for Worcestershire.



Peanuts	£
2.2 kg / 5lbs	4.60
12.5kg / 27.5 lbs	23.50
25kg / 55.1 lbs	41.50
50kg / 110.2 lbs	76.00
Garden Wild Bird Food	
2.2kg / 5lbs	2.70
12.5kg / 27.5 lbs	13.00
20kg / 44.1 lbs	17.50
40kg / 88.2 lbs	31.00
Black Sunflower Seed	
1.8kg / 4lbs	3.10
12.5kg	18.50
20kg	26.50
Niger Seed	
1kg	2.50
Sunflower hearts/kernels	
3lbs	3.50
50lbs	44.00
Fat Balls	
Large	1.30
Small	35p
Pack of 6 small fat balls	1.80
Starter Pack	1.50

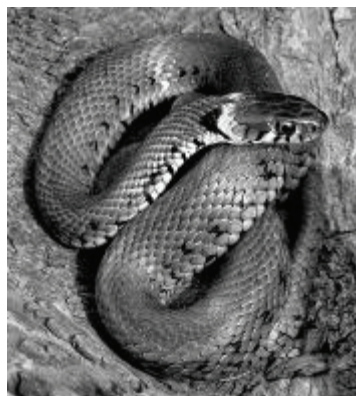
Available from Lower Smite Farm reception and most Local Group indoor meetings

We're looking for wildlife and wild places photos for our 2013 calendar – have you got what we want?

Whether a frog or a frosty scene, a snail or a snowdrop, all we ask is that your image was taken on one of our nature reserves. Whatever you choose to enter we'll pick 12 of the best to feature in our next calendar; winners will receive one free copy of the calendar.

How to enter: Complete the entry form available on the main website or on the rear page of your members' magazine. Then just send with your CD of images to:
**Photography Competition,
 Worcestershire Wildlife Trust,
 Lower Smite Farm, Smite Hill, Hindlip,
 Worcester, WR3 8SZ**

Closing date: Monday 13th February 2012
 Winners announced on Facebook & Flickr as well in local press and our spring magazine.

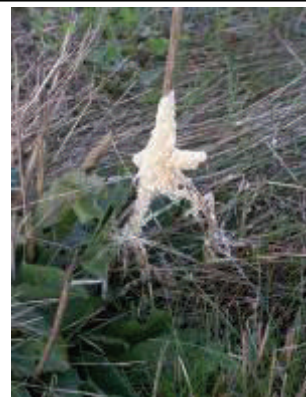


Above: One of this year's winners. A grass snake by Barry Green

Unusual grazing animals at Lower Smite Farm!

A herd of slime moulds: this structure is a plasmodium and comprises a colony of primitive creatures or slime moulds. The plasmodium is moving (very very slowly) through our grassland whilst grazing on bacteria fungal spores and other pieces of tiny organic matter. They are harmless and have probably got together since nutrients are less available at this time of year and the colony absorbs food more effectively than an individual.

By Caroline Corsie



Calling all Volunteers!

We need your contributions to our volunteers' blog. All you need to do is write a few sentences on what you have seen or done on a reserve and email it to Wendy Carter - wendy@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org and she will do the rest! Photos are welcomed too.

Visit the BLOG:

www.worcestershirewildlifetrust.blogspot.com

Join our fanbase on FACEBOOK:

www.facebook.com

Photographs on FLICKR:

www.flickr.com/photosworcestershirewildlifetrust

Local Group Deadline

What's On events and newsletter
1st March 2012
(aiming for early April mailing)

Date for LGLC at Smite

Monday 26th March at 7pm

Agenda sent out week before - if you would like to suggest an item for discussion please email Wendy. All committee members welcome.

Local Group Area Memberships

Bromsgrove 982
Droitwich 780
Malvern 1248
Redditch 941
South Birmingham 685
Stourbridge 631
South East Worcestershire 1183
Wyre Forest 1382
Worcester 2095
(as of 1st Nov 2011)

New Greetings Cards

New range of greetings cards available from Lower Smite Farm and Local Group meetings.

Beautiful photographs taken on Trust reserves

£3.75 for pack of 8, featuring 2 each of 4 designs.



2012 Calendar Available Now

£6.50



Adopt a Species

A great gift
starting from just
£10

To adopt call us on 01905 754919

*We wish all of our
volunteers a very
Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year*

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust,
Lower Smite Farm, Smite Hill, Hindlip,
Worcester, WR3 8SZ

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