



Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

Stourbridge & Hagley Local Group
Newsletter August 2019



KINVER CENTENARY PATH WALK

Our first outdoor event of the year, on 11th May, was a walk that followed the Kinver centenary path. Money for the creation of the path was raised during 2017 to mark the centenary of the donation of Kinver Edge to the National Trust. The idea was to upgrade existing paths with an easily accessible route to link the newly acquired Blakeshall land (formerly Kingsford Country Park) with the remainder of the property.

Our starting point was below Holy Austin Rock houses and our guide (assistant ranger Tom Griffin) took us along the path through the woodland beneath the escarpment towards Nanny's Rock. On the way he pointed out the thinning that had been done in the woodland at Gorse Covert & Redcliff Covert. We also looked at some of the ride widening done by the volunteers in order to improve the ground flora and habitat for insects and other invertebrates. Along the way we listened to the bird song including cuckoo, chiffchaff and blackcap and watched as blue tits entered their nest hole to feed chicks.



Sue, Wendy & John on the centenary path

We had a brief stop at Nanny's Rock to look at the unusual plants that have colonised the base of this former rock house. Our route took us over the county boundary into Worcestershire near another former rock house at Vales Rock and past a remnant of the Kingsford heathland where

we paused to watch a tree pipit performing its display flight. Our route took us in a loop through the mainly conifer plantation up to the top of the escarpment where Tom explained the proposal to remove some of the conifers to create a link between the Kingsford heathland and that of the dip slope. As we walked along the crest of the ridge we were able to compare the flora of the



Tom pointing out the flora on the heathland

plantation habitat with an area where conifers had been removed in 2015 and the main area of heathland. The highlights of this part of the walk were two beautiful butterflies, the small copper and green hairstreak.

We returned to Holy Austin Rock after a very interesting and informative walk where several of us made use of the café facilities. Thanks are due to our very knowledgeable guide, Tom Griffin.

Ian Williams

I-SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE!

It's April and I'm not the only one appreciating the warmth of the sunshine on my back. As I wander up the garden to check how well the washing is drying I hear a 'buzz' and find myself seemingly surrounded by a myriad of flying creatures. One, finding me in its flight path, spent ages checking me out, flying all around me, turning to look me straight in the eye as I turned to watch what it was doing too. Its hind-legs laden with pollen, it was evidently anxious to be on its way back to a hive....no time to stop and chat!

Only the day before a workman in my garden had commented on the number of bees working away in the Japanese cherry. He was up a ladder and had a grandstand view! It's actually only a small tree, especially when compared to an adjacent Norwegian acer on the other side of the garden wall, but can always be relied on to give a good display of blossom and hence attracts a diverse range of pollinating insects. It's an excellent choice for small gardens.

Reaching for my back pocket (mobile/camera) I forget the washing in my attempts to photograph as many different species as possible. Even if out of focus, the pictures serve as a reminder and give me a better chance of identifying what I have been watching. If still un-identifiable, I'll send it off to Worcestershire Biological Records Centre (see below) for an expert's opinion and inclusion in their database.

At this point I invariably wish that I was a child again with only my I-spy books to aid me. Back then a bee was a bee or just maybe a bumble. A wasp was a wasp, to be avoided at all costs. There was only one kind of ladybird and a fly was a fly or sometimes a blue-bottle. Likewise a daisy was just that and a buttercup too. The roses in the hedgerow were dog roses and the 'old man's beard' I eventually learned was clematis, a chalkland indicator plant. I learned to tell an oak from a beech, a sycamore from an ash or an elm (remind me....what were they?). In the 1950-60s at 6d (old pence) I was lucky to be given one or two of these little paperback books, which I treasured for far too many years. It was, after-all, one book that I was allowed and, indeed, actually encouraged to write in. Life seemed so much simpler then!

Fast forward to today and identifying wildlife of any kind can perhaps seem rather daunting and somewhat intimidating with so many specialist books and online websites to consult. Where to start can be off-putting and a start might therefore never be made. Every species seems to have a Society attached, an atlas to consult and an identification key that is not always as easy to follow as we'd like. However, hopefully many of you will have already made a start or will continue in your endeavours by recording what turns up in your gardens this year. Many thanks go to Avril for her initiative in producing the recording sheets. When the data is all collated it will be fascinating to see what turned up in your gardens, on your window-boxes or local patch as well as

mine. Not only is it interesting to see and hear about, the information gathered really is of great importance. With this in mind it is worth sending your sightings off to be included in the ever growing database at Worcestershire Biological Records Centre.

This is easily done by:

emailing details to records@wbrc.org.uk

online at www.wbrc.org.uk/wbrc/records/html

by post to WBRC, Lower Smite Farm, Hindlip, Worcs. WR3 8SZ

Wendy Larmour

MAGPIES Part 2

How the magpie got its name

The earliest record of the magpie is in an Anglo Saxon document which mentions a *pyge*, an Old English translation of the Latin *pica*, which in Old French became *pie* meaning black and white or pied. Today the Latin name for the magpie is *pica pica*.

As for the first syllable, a *magot* was the French word for a noisy, mischievous monkey. Another suggestion is that *mag* was the diminutive of Margaret or Margery and in Middle English; this was a name sometimes used to suggest an idle gossip or chatterer. Both of these could relate to the raucous nature of the magpie. However, it was Shakespeare who wrote in *Macbeth* of the 'maggot pie, and it has been a *magpie* ever since.

Wendy Wilkins

Volunteer days at Penorchard Meadows

Work parties are held on Mondays 10am – 3pm
Meet at St. Kenelm's Church car park on



Burnet moth at
Penorchard Meadows

August 5th
September 2nd
October 7th
November 4th
December 2nd

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