

# WildTimes



Worcestershire  
Wildlife Trust

Hello and welcome to the  
autumn 2019 edition...



It's that time again folks! Where have the last few months gone? That crisp autumn air is certainly making itself apparent in the mornings and evenings. The colours are already beginning to change as the leaves start to turn and drop as the trees to prepare for the colder months. I love seeing the bright autumn leaves illuminated as avenues, woodlands and hillsides glow with a mixture of reds, oranges and yellows.

Looking back, though, what a great summer with so many butterflies, hoverflies and dragonflies across our nature reserves. The weather was slightly off from being average with wetter months and some high temperatures but the wildlife took it all in its stride. Looking around on the reserves the apple crops have suffered but the berries have produced a bumper harvest; sunshine makes them super sweet!

Summer tasks can be a bit fiddly with many of our volunteer reserve work parties taking a break whilst the wildlife flourishes, birds nest and fledge, flowers bloom and flying insects take to the wing. We've mowed in many places - starting with hay cuts that we use to strew on other reserves, encouraging flowers to spread amongst local fields. Now we are cutting to keep nutrients low and create space for flowers to grow.

As always folks I cannot thank you enough for everything you do to help us. Together we will keep Worcestershire wild!

Best wishes

*Helen Dorey*

Volunteer Coordinator

**New look!**

**Practical  
Conservation  
Calendar [autumn/  
winter now available  
on our \(new\) website](#)**

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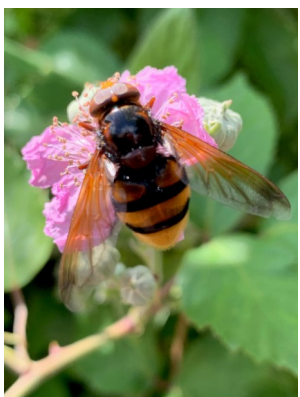
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Photos ©Helen Dorey



## Practical Conservation Work parties



Practical conservation volunteers spend their time helping us on our nature reserves. It is an active role, great for keeping fit and a great way to socialise.  
Our roving group meets twice a week and helps to manage sites all over the county. Alternatively, you can stick to one reserve and see it change through the seasons.  
For any of our practical conservation groups you need to wear: fieldwork/gardening clothes, sturdy boots or wellingtons and gardening gloves. Waterproofs are also recommended.  
You will need to bring lunch and refreshments for yourself. Please bear in mind there are no facilities on our reserves.





Worcestershire  
Wildlife Trust

You are invited to  
**Our floodplain meadows  
through time**

**A free event on Tuesday 22nd October  
From 10am to 3pm**

**Celebrating the importance of Hardwick Green Meadows  
and its surroundings**

Mike Smart (Severn Curlew Project Officer, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust breeding curlew project)

Emma Rothero (Outreach Co-ordinator, Floodplain Meadows Partnership)

Paul Hudson (Outreach manager, Worcestershire County Council Historic Environment Records team)

At Redmarley Village Hall, Redmarley d'Abitot GL19 3HS

Refreshments and a light lunch will be provided free of charge

Booking essential – RSVP to Liz Bunney, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Lower Smite Farm, Smite Hill, Hindlip, Worcestershire WR3 8SZ

[liz@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org](mailto:liz@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org)

OR online <https://ourfloodplainmeadows.eventbrite.co.uk>

Please reply (indicating if you have any dietary preferences) by 16th October



Worcestershire  
Curlew Group

Floodplain  
Meadows  
Partnership



worcestershire  
county council





## Eastern Reserves News - Eleanor Reast, Eastern Reserves Officer

The mornings are getting a tad chillier as autumn approaches, which means the meadows have been cut for hay now. A lot of you may have heard mention of 'green hay'. This is the process of taking newly cut species-rich hay and associated seed from a donor site to a more species-poor receptor site with the aim of increasing the diversity of wildflower species. This year a section of Eades (photo) was taken to a neighbouring farm, which is great news as it will help to buffer Eades Meadow and increase the amount of food for pollinators as well as everything else that is associated with them. More homes for wildlife!



Over at Grafton Wood the Worcestershire Bat Group trapped and released a grand total of 17 bats including natterer's, whiskered, soprano, pipistrelles, brown long-eared and four Bechstein's. Knowing these species are present will go into our management work for the site.

Below is a picture of a few of our keen-as-mustard volunteers clearing blackthorn this August...I'm sure I heard "cutting blackthorn at Grafton is our favourite thing, when are we there next?!" uttered on the minibus...or maybe I was feeling funny from the heat?! It may be a sweat-inducing and prickly task but you've got to say it's satisfying! The reason for us cutting it this early? Brown hairstreak butterflies are fussy creatures, only liking young blackthorn growth on which to lay their eggs. They tend to emerge late summer so this narrow window is the only time we're able to clear the old blackthorn after the birds have nested but before the adults use the blackthorn to lay their eggs on.

Last month I got to do a spot of birding with Bill Oddie (photo)! He was being filmed by a film crew all the way from Australia for a programme called 'Julia Zemiro's Home Delivery'. Julia takes a celebrity back to their youth, so Bill, who is famous in Australia for his comedy with The Goodies, took them to Upton Warren - a site he used to visit in his early birding days. He was an absolute delight and wished he could have stayed longer to enjoy the birds...he may well return.

Speaking of Upton Warren, in the next issue of Wildtimes I'll be able to show you pictures of the machinery creating wonderful things at Upton Warren. Works are happening as I type...





Having not done a general update across my reserves for a while, I thought I'd cover as many as I could for this edition. So, in no particular order...

We've been continuing to work with Wychavon District Council (WDC) at Droitwich Community Woods, which as you may know is a site owned by WDC and we help them to manage it with our volunteers and conservation advice. Over the last few years, new staff have come in on both sides and we've been working together to improve the reserve for wildlife and visitors. This means that our volunteer groups have got a busy winter schedule ahead of them and we've got plenty of exciting plans in the pipeline. One of these is to get local children interested in this



Glow worm © Les Clarke

greenspace on their doorstep, so approaching the nearby schools in Droitwich was an important part of the process. Marissa and Sadie (WWT Engagement Team) have put a lot of work into this and our latest management visit to the woods was aimed at finding a suitable location for a 'forest school' area. We've found a very promising area by the river that hopefully will inspire the younger generation to learn more about our wild habitats and grow up wanting to protect them, as I did. As a quick wildlife update, the glow worms here seem to have had another good summer and I see or hear a kingfisher most times I visit.

At The Knapp & Papermill, the volunteers have put tremendous effort into improving Papermill Meadow this year. Bracken has been creeping into the meadow over the last few years and starting to dominate over the more delicate wildflowers. So this year we've been experimenting with bashing and/or strimming the bracken at strategic times to weaken it – mid-May, late-June and early-August seem to work well. We've already noticed a small difference in the amount of bracken but to really keep on top of it (regular roving volunteers look away now), we need to continue this approach for the next three-five years!



Devil's-bit scabious © Helen Dorey

The devil's-bit scabious has been in flower here for the last few weeks and really is looking brilliant. It provides a great late summer/early autumn food source for invertebrates when there's not much else in flower. The roving volunteers have helped to mow sections of Papermill Meadow over the last few weeks but we've been sure to leave patches of flowering scabious for this very reason. Not only is the scabious great for insects, it also helps to attract bats to feed on night-flying species such as moths. This is particularly useful for the resident bats within Papermill Cottage as it's right on their doorstep!

In mid-September we did a bat survey at the cottage to count the number of lesser horseshoe bats roosting in it. This time last year there were 43 flying out from a slit in the window boards and the main chimney. You may remember that we had roofers and builders working on the cottage earlier this year to make it weatherproof, keep it standing for years to come and to put extra features in to enhance it for bat occupation. We also doubled the size of the window slit that we'd seen bats flying out of. I'm very happy to say that this year's count was up to 45 lesser horseshoes, including 21 which were using the newly improved window slit as their exit of choice! The bats foraged on the midges around the little garden before heading off into the meadows and wider countryside. We'll have to wait until winter when the bats are likely to be hibernating elsewhere to see if the new bat lofts have been used yet.

Monkwood, Trench Wood and Blackhouse Wood have seen a quiet summer in terms of work as we don't do anything that might disturb breeding wildlife here between March and September. All are set to have their ride edges cut within the next few weeks as part of our ongoing management to create and maintain lovely flowery verges along the main paths. Monkwood and Trench in particular have also had another year of really good butterfly numbers, which is a direct result of our volunteer teams' hard work doing ride-side cutting, coppicing and so on. Despite rolling into autumn, there are still plenty of butterflies around and lots of other wildlife too. Spotted flycatchers seem to be popping up at Monkwood and The Knapp recently, so keep your eyes open if you're visiting!

Enjoy the changing seasons, I shall probably have my woolly hat on when I write the next WildTimes article!



Work continued apace during the summer on all our nature reserves so a big thank you to everyone involved. I am particularly grateful to everyone who has helped, and continues to help, whilst I was off work for a foot operation. I am back now and gradually getting back to normal!

Intensive efforts were made in the summer to remove Himalayan balsam from our reserves lying alongside brooks and rivers in the Wyre Forest, including Bewdley Meadows and the Helen Mackaness reserve. Bracken encroachment on open ground was also tackled at Pound Green Common, The Devil's Spittleful, Button Oak, Mackaness and Bewdley Meadow. Hay cuts included Pound Green and Bewdley Meadows, with some green hay from Bewdley Meadow being harvested by Wyre Community Land Trust first to enhance fields at Uncllys Farm in the Wyre Forest. Thank you for all your efforts.



WCLT volunteers and staff team distribute the green hay across the fields



# Southern Reserves News - David Molloy, Southern Reserves Officer



As summer draws to a close most of the southern grassland reserves have now received their annual hair cuts and are preparing to settle down for the winter. Before they do though, we will be bringing back our bovine lawn mowers to help keep the more dominant grasses in check over the next few months.

One of the reserves where this is particularly relevant is Windmill Hill. This magnificent calcareous grassland reserve is located on a steep bank near Offenham, just outside Evesham. Due to the gradient, it is impossible to get machinery onto the site to take a hay cut. As such, grazing is the only available method of vegetation control. Since July a herd of 12 cattle have been steadily chewing away at the site for this purpose. For the first time in many years we will be following this up with a herd of sheep. Historically, parts of Windmill Hill were common land and were

therefore heavily grazed by local livestock. Repeating this management practice will help to ensure that the diverse range of wildflowers found on the reserve (May – July) continue to bloom for many years to come. A team of volunteers meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of every month to carry out a range of habitat management tasks on Windmill Hill. If you are interested in helping wildlife and can spare a few hours a month then please contact us for more details at [volunteer@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org](mailto:volunteer@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org)

In other news, the grassland restoration project at Nash's Meadows continues afoot. On 21<sup>st</sup> August the Trust's Roving Volunteer Work Party spent the day collecting hay from Boynes Coppice & Meadows nature reserve and strewing it over the meadows at Nash's. This is the second year in which locally sourced seed has been introduced to the reserve in order to help establish a more diverse wildflower community. It may take a few years for the new seed to take hold but once they have a foothold then Nash's Meadows will be well on its way to returning to a fantastic site for wildflowers.

A flyer for a volunteer work party. The top section is black with white text: "Get involved Volunteer Windmill Hill Nature Reserve". The middle section is yellow with black text: "Get your hands dirty and help Evesham's local wildlife! Join our volunteer work party 1st Tuesday of every month". The bottom section is black with white text: "Windmill Hill Nature Reserve, North Littleton WR11 8QS. You'll get fresh air, exercise and meet new people. No experience needed. Guidance and tools provided. Find out more by calling us on 01905 754919 www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk". The flyer features a photograph of a grassland area with a wooden fence and a bench. The Wildlife Trusts logo is in the top right corner. The bottom right corner has the text "Protecting wildlife where we live".



# Engagement Team updates

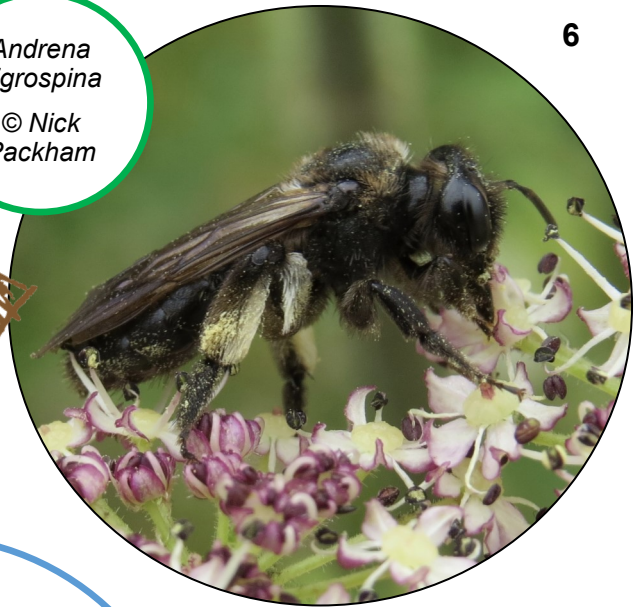
- Nick Packham & Team!

## Delving into Droitwich

We held our first engagement events at Droitwich Woods! We were testing it out as a new venue for engaging with local people. We ran a bug hunt, got people strewing hay to create a new area of wildflower meadow and ran a sold-out evening bat and glow worm walk for families.

*Andrena nigrospina*

© Nick Packham



## Un-Bee-lievable Sighting

We were really excited to spot a scarce black mining bee (*Andrena nigrospina*) on one of our northern reserves. It is very rare across the country!

## Children in Care

We ran a couple of bespoke events for Children Always First: a charity that supports children in care. About 15 young people came to the farm for an afternoon of woodland fun!



*Eyed Hawk Moth Larva*

© Patrick Linturn



## Wild on Wednesdays

We continued holding a variety of events aimed at connecting young people with different habitats and wildlife during the summer holidays - part of our **year-round programme of activities for families.**

## Hardwick Green Project Highlights Liz Bunney, Hardwick Green project Officer

1. Over 200 species were recorded at Hardwick Green Meadows bioblitz in June
2. Pendock Primary School performed a play called 'Where the Meadows Flower' based on the oral history interviews that some the children had conducted with local people through the project.
3. 86 children came to Hardwick Green Meadows in the summer term to take part in some nature discovery activities.

**Want to know more?**

**Take a look at the invitation to our open event on page 2: BOOKING ESSENTIAL [contact Liz Bunney](#)**

## Our Oral History

Over the summer, the finishing touches were put on the Trust's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Oral History project, which involved gathering recordings of the voices and memories of our volunteers. **Fancy a listen?** The audio is now available on our website - search for volunteer voices





## News from the Reserves Office: Being Constructive - Andy Harris

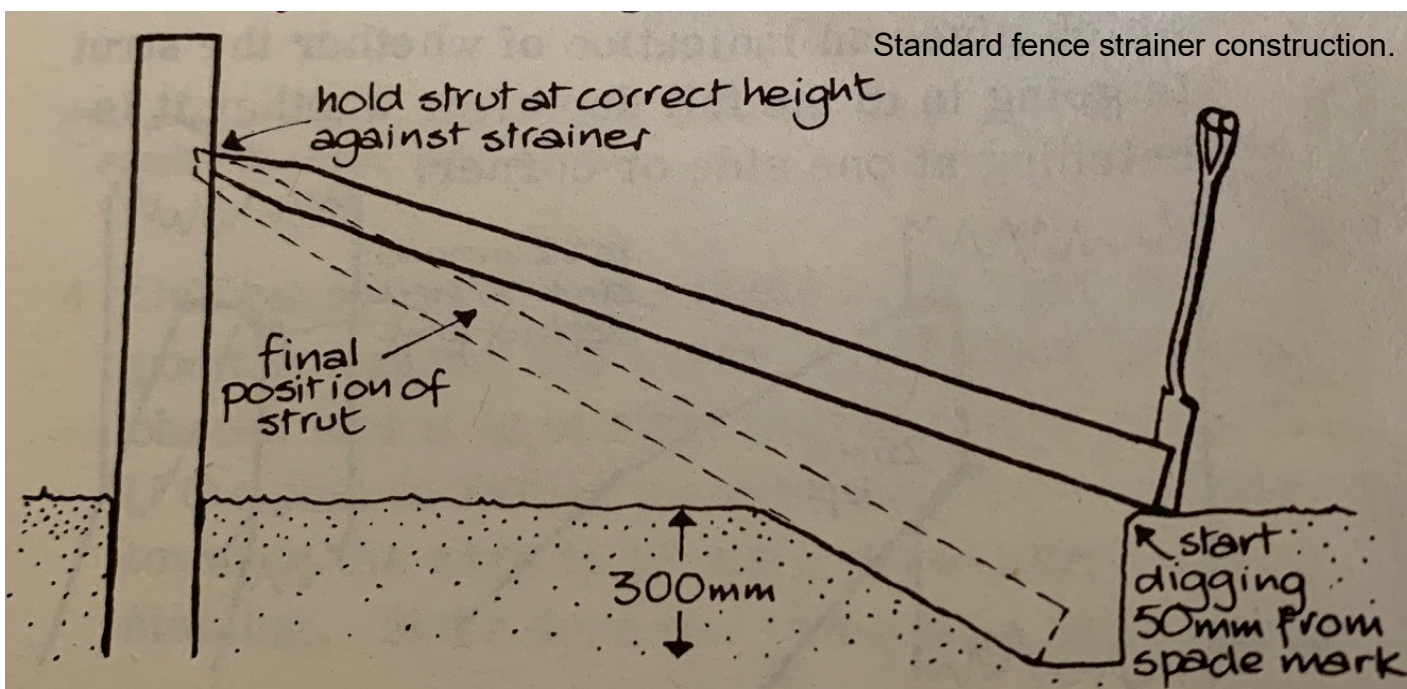
Many of our nature reserves have man-made features in, around or on them. They are sometimes indicative of their past history and some are more obvious than others (e.g. Papermill Cottage stands out on any visit to The Knapp & Papermill). Many of our pools, such as Broadmoor Wood, are artificial; kept in place by dams, which themselves may be hidden by vegetation and not that apparent. Sunken trackways give clues to ancient cart routes linking places (e.g. in Chaddesley Woods). Ancient banks define woodland edges and may date back many centuries. In our meadows, field systems tell of a time when fields were shallow ploughed, cultivated by cattle or horses pulling ploughs (e.g. Penorchard Meadow).

Historically, livestock grazing on meadows and marsh were protected by dense laid hedges. The intensive labour needed to keep hedges maintained as stock barriers made it uneconomic to do so from the 1950s onwards. There was also a decline in available winter labour as agriculture intensified. Metal fencing proved a cheaper alternative; iron fencing was typically used around large estates, properties and small fields. Its remnants are still found on some reserves and could date back to the earliest mass production in the 1850s. Barbed wire started to be mass produced in the 1890s and even today wire is considerably cheaper than wooden fencing. Today we use both wire or wood depending on the situation. Sometimes sheep or pig netting (a meshed fence) is used - as its name suggests this is better at keeping small livestock in. Field gates are readily available in both metal or wood. Both are attractive to thieves so we do what we can to make sure they are secure. This includes fixing the upper hinges facing down so a gate can not be 'lifted' off its hinge. We may also file off the bolt thread to make it hard to undo nuts.

Some sites are not grazed but still require fencing to define the land holding, keeping neighbour's livestock out (if they are not keeping them in) and helping keep people away from sensitive or hazardous areas. High deer fencing may be used to protect regrowth in woodlands from browsing. There are downsides as all wire fencing can be a hazard to wildlife when panicked, getting caught on it. Large birds and deer are perhaps most vulnerable. Some fencing acts as an unintended barrier and hence you may come across features like badger gates on some reserves.

### Fencing design

As the fences we build are functional we aim to build them to a high standard. Typically we follow standard designs, with our fall-back always being The Conservation Volunteers handbooks. It is still possible to get hold of old copies of these conservation bibles. Titles include Fencing, Wetlands, Woodlands, Footpaths and Tool Maintenance. They are viewable on line for a fee and we are in discussions with TCV to see if we can access these to share information with you.





# Bird Notes from Lower Smite Farm - by Steve Bloomfield

## 2019's migration in action:

Basing life on birds rather than the weather or calendar (and why not), autumn at the farm started on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. The harbinger was a very vocal redstart, 'hueeting' away in a tall hedge as they do in most years. This trans-Saharan migrant is usually the first to arrive here as summer ends, though some birds linger into late August and even September. Most individuals are quite site faithful and once settled they'll often spend their whole stay within an area of a few tens of metres. A prerequisite for this behaviour is a rich source of invertebrate food and so our wide field margins and diverse bushy hedges offer just the right conditions with abundant insects and suitable cover. So far we've had four this autumn.



Redstarts pass through the county on a so-called 'broad front' meaning that they can turn up more or less anywhere. Several common migrants do this and their arrival here offers a nice yardstick for all those unseen birds passing overhead. Perhaps the easiest of these to catch up with is the meadow pipit. Local birds are joined at this time of year by others from the continent as they head south to their chosen wintering grounds and migrating birds utter insistent 'tseep tseep' calls, which carry quite well on the breeze and draw attention even to high-flying flocks. At peak times over 100/ hour passing over the farm is not unusual. Top count here this autumn was 66/hour on Sept. 6<sup>th</sup>.

Watching fly-overs (known as 'vis-migging') can be an entertaining way to enjoy migration but grounded birds are usually easier to see well. Along with hedgerow redstarts this year we've also enjoyed 3 confiding wheatears. These are really birds of open ground and here they used round hay bales as feeding perches from which they scoured the surrounding short turf for prey. These good-looking chats are off to sub-Saharan Africa and so our diverse grasslands with their abundant insects provide feeding opportunities for birds with a very long way to go!

### This year's autumn highlights so far:

**Redstart.** 4 birds, July 22<sup>nd</sup> – Sept 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Wheatear.** 3 birds, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Sept.

**Tree pipit.** 4 birds, 12<sup>th</sup> August – 28<sup>th</sup> August

**Green sandpiper.** 2 birds, 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept.

**Nuthatch** (very scarce at the farm) 14<sup>th</sup> September



### **Feeding the birds this winter?**

Don't forget we have a partnership with **Vine House Farm**. You can buy their bird food direct from us at [Lower Smite Farm](http://Lower Smite Farm) or via their website and every purchase supports your local Wildlife Trust as well as your local birds! Hooray! [www.vinehousefarm.co.uk](http://www.vinehousefarm.co.uk)

We've received over £20,000 over the last 10 years

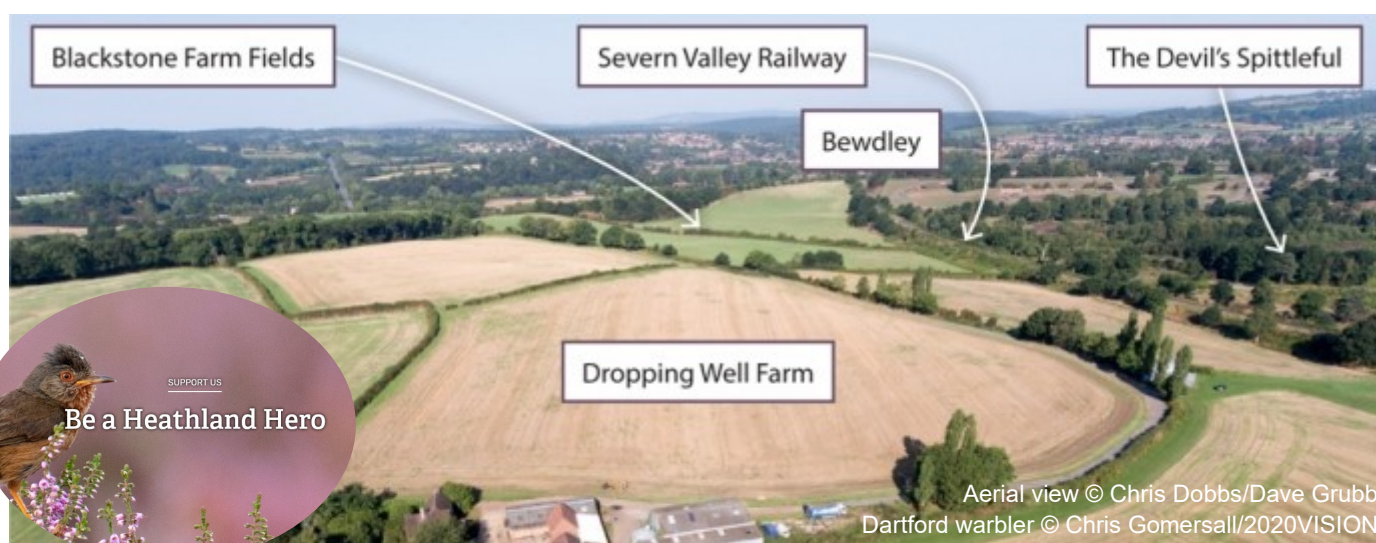




## Saving Worcestershire's Heathlands - Mike Perry, Head of Resources

Following on from our exciting announcement in the last edition of WildTimes, we've had a really great response to our ask for pledges of support for our fundraising efforts to purchase land at Dropping Well Farm near Kidderminster. The purchase of this land will connect up our nature reserves at The Devil's Spittleful and Blackstone Farm Fields as well as those owned by Wyre Forest District Council including the Rifle Range and Burlish Top. Together these will form the largest block of heathland in Worcestershire.

Members and supporters have pledged an amazing £120,000 towards the fundraising campaign to date. We have also received the great news that we have been funded for the next year by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to develop the project further and submit a second stage application around this time next year for a large contribution towards the purchase. Our fundraising efforts will continue over the next year to raise the remaining funds ahead of applying for the final stage to the Heritage Fund. If anyone would like to know more or get involved, there is more information available on the [Trust website](#) or speak to [Mike Perry](#) or [Sian Bakewell](#).



## Volunteering opportunities...

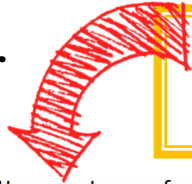
Our volunteer work parties are in full-swing and are always looking for extra help but if you're looking to try something a bit different, take a look at some of these [volunteer opportunities](#):

- ♥ **Christmas Craft Fair Volunteers - Saturday 16th November:** fancy helping out with anything from refreshments to car parking or set-up and pack-down? It's a great team effort!
- ♥ **Wildlife Garden Volunteer Leader:** green-fingered and looking for an exciting project? We are looking for a volunteer to lead on the planning and delivery of our wildlife garden here at Lower Smite Farm, alongside a small group of volunteer wildlife gardeners.
- ♥ **Wildlife Garden Volunteer:** we are also looking for more helpers to join the garden team
- ♥ **Nature Reserve Volunteer Managers/Deputies:** we are looking for more people to help with the management of their local nature reserve - as leaders, or deputy leaders - to help with running volunteer work parties and general maintenance of the reserves
- ♥ **Nature Reserve Volunteer Wardens:** do you regularly walk your local nature reserve? Could you be our eyes-on-the-ground and report back problems or carry out light maintenance? We are looking for people all over the county to join as wardens - particularly in the Southern Meadows of Merries Farm, Ryefield Meadows and Duke of York Meadow.
- ♥ **Club WoW Volunteer Leaders:** fancy helping to deliver fun, engaging outdoor activities to young children once a month at Lower Smite Farm? A great way to give something back.

**Interested?** Contact [volunteer@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org](mailto:volunteer@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org) or visit [our website](#)



# Other ways to help...



**Christmas stock now in!**  
**Tea towels, chocolates, cards and calendars...**

## Shop for wildlife

Support our conservation work through the purchase of cards, calendars and a variety of gifts for wildlife-lovers. 100% of profits help wildlife in Worcestershire.



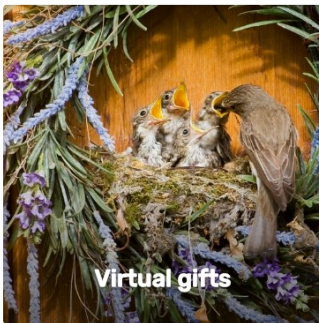
Christmas cards



Gifts



Adopt a sp...



Virtual gifts



Calendar



GU

**Worcestershire Wildlife Trust**  
**Tiddesley Wood**  
 near Pershore

# Log & wood chip sales

Sat & Sun 28th & 29th September 2019  
 Sat & Sun 26th & 27th October 2019  
 Sat & Sun 30th Nov & 1st December 2019  
 Sat & Sun 4th & 5th January 2020  
 Sat & Sun 1st & 2nd February 2020  
 Sat & Sun 29th Feb & 1st March 2020  
 Sales 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. each day

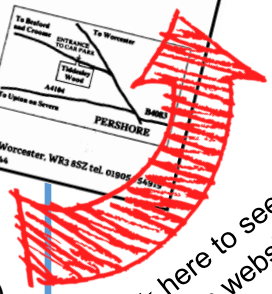
*Sold in aid of wildlife conservation*

Loose without bags £6 a bag  
 Logs £6 a bag  
 Loaded loose into trailers, car boots etc,  
 Any amount big or small.

Follow main road (B4084) out of Pershore towards Worcester. Turn left at top of Ailesborough Hill following c500 yds look for signs. WR10 2AD will get you near for Sat Naves.

**www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk**  
**www.tiddesley.org.uk**

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Lower Smite Farm, Smite Hill, Hindlip, Worcester, WR3 8SZ, tel. 01905 541111  
 Charity no. 256618 company no. 929664



Click here to see dates on website

## Log Sales are back!

The annual Tiddesley Wood Log Sales have started up, so if you're looking to stock up for the cold snap. All proceeds support our work.

**Helping out is a great way to keep fit too:** Janet, a 'Log Lobber' volunteer, recorded 3740 steps, 1.53 miles and 139 additional Kcal burned (via her FitBit) during one 2-hour session of 'log lobbing' last year! **Do good: Feel good!!**

**WILDLIFE TRAVEL**

**Holidays 2020**

all our profits are donated to the Wildlife Trusts

## Wildlife Travel that supports your Wildlife Trust:

Did you know we have a partnership with Wildlife Travel? All the profits from their wildlife holidays are donated to the Wildlife Trusts. We have received over £2,500 in Worcestershire, with over £220,000 being donated across all the Trusts since the partnership began.

Whether travelling as individuals, couples or friends, no previous knowledge is needed and the pace is comfortable with a good standard of accommodation and travel. From Mull to Morocco and much more in between, there are plenty of destinations to choose from. Download a 2020 brochure at [www.wildlife-travel.co.uk](http://www.wildlife-travel.co.uk)

# Thank you!



For all your ongoing support - in all it's many forms...

we simply couldn't do it without you!