

Bromsgrove & NE Worcestershire Winter 2019



**Worcestershire
Wildlife Trust**

Support your local group

I went along to give a talk about farm wildlife to the Tamworth branch of Staffordshire Wildlife Trust a few weeks ago. Whilst on my way I took time to eat my sandwiches sat on the platform of the railway station and reminisced about my trainspotting visits there in the early 1960s. It was simply the nearest place to my home in Halesowen where, on a local train from Birmingham, I could visit the main line between London and the north. They were exceptional days and far removed from my more regular ventures into the countryside.

When I finally found and settled myself into the venue, I was informed that the 10 people making up the audience was now their regular attendance and they were having to take the difficult decision to close the group.

Local group attendance varies enormously from small groups like this one to another Staffordshire Wildlife Trust group that I visit at Womborne, which is thriving.

There are groups of all different kinds in our communities - from wildlife-focused ones like ours through gardening to history and lots more besides. I know that people have many calls on their busy lives but in order for local groups to flourish, I appeal to you as Trust members to support your local groups and communities by coming out and attending our meetings. You'll have the chance to hear

about fascinating subjects and meet new people; after all, you can only enjoy yourself at such events.

I look forward to seeing you at one of our meetings in the near future.

Gordon

Wed Dec 4th

Flowers of the Dolomites
Dr John Page

Wed Jan 8th

Willows Hedgehog Rescue
Charlie & Jayne Walker

Wed Feb 5th

Island Wildlife
Rosemary Winnall

Wed Mar 4th

The Restoration of Blackhouse Wood
Dominique Cragg

Wed Apr 1st

Namibia
John Medlock

Our meetings take place at Bournheath
Village Hall, Claypit Lane,
Bournheath, B61 9LA

All meetings start at 7.30pm, costing £2.50
We welcome both members
and non-members

A year in the wilds of Worcestershire

Our Wildlife Heroes campaign to find people doing great things for wildlife is nearing its third year. We asked one of Bromsgrove's Wildlife Heroes, Linda Jones to give us an insight into her wildlife-friendly garden...

Our garden, near Bromsgrove town centre, measures c900m². We manage it mainly for wildlife but it's a haven for us and we get immense enjoyment watching it evolve.

The seasons turn

Our spring normally starts with frogs in the pond. We also venture out for "Frogwatch" - regular evening patrols on our local (busy) roads to rescue frogs and toads heading to ponds like ours.

Our winter and early spring flowering heather, followed by crocuses, daffodils and bluebells, fill the garden with colour and scent for bees and butterflies (and us). We aim to have flowering plants throughout the year to provide



constant food and keep the garden buzzing. This year, we bought a cuckooflower for the swamp bed and were rewarded with a visiting orange tip butterfly. We don't always buy plants - a self-seeded heather plant has, with a little care, grown to a large patch and provides valued cover for insects and frogs.

By mid-June the flower meadow area is normally in full bloom. As the seeds set it's lovely to see families of goldfinches balance on flower stalks and feed from natural sources like knapweed, cornflower and hawk-bit.

We have speckled wood and holly blue butterflies and, on a warm day at the end of June, strong southerly winds brought four rather worn painted ladies into our front garden. Since then, good weather brought gatekeepers and even ringlets. We've had good numbers of peacocks as well as tortoiseshell, comma, red admiral and even more painted ladies. That's not to ignore the moths - going out at dusk with the sky full of wings.

We've had more dragonflies this year (we enlarged the pond last autumn) and have also seen more hedgehogs; we saw up to seven hogs (including a mother with two little ones!

During winter more unusual visitors are driven into our town garden. Fieldfares arrive as a flock but are possessive about food so we end up scattering halved apples all over the garden; in early March 2018 we had 40+ fieldfares visiting.

'Re-wild' your garden?

To somebody unsure about re-wilding their garden I would say that it takes a bit of upfront work to clear pre-existing lawns as well as some ongoing maintenance to ensure certain plants do not take over. There is, however, a lot less lawn-cutting - with one annual cut at the right time our flower meadow area requires very little maintenance.

The garden doesn't have to be just for wildlife. We have productive apple trees, raspberry hedges, blueberries, an asparagus patch and grow other veg that doesn't seem to mind sharing the veg beds with teasel, columbine flower and goldenrod.

Just adding water makes a huge difference. We have separate ponds for the frogs and "bird bath" areas so the birds are not tempted to eat the tadpoles - a shallow dip with gravel and gradually sloped sides is great for birds and hedgehogs, bees and other insects.

The most important point is to enjoy the garden, planning its layout to avoid making it a chore. Instead, make time to watch. We cannot count the number of times we go out to



work, only to rush back in for the camera to photograph something interesting instead. Even after eight years our garden still has surprises and new species - we've had albino frogs (and spawn), breeding goldcrests, grasshoppers in the meadow area and even a grass snake.

Now, with shorter and crisper days, with morning mists turning the cobwebs into silvery-white works of art, we are looking forward to discovering further surprises as the year closes.

What is lurking in your garden and how can you enrich your habitat beyond your back door?



Perhaps you know someone who's doing great things for wildlife? Building nest boxes for the community, managing a pollinator patch, inspiring others? Why not nominate them for a Wildlife Heroes award

www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-heroes