

WildTimes



Worcestershire
Wildlife Trust

Hi everyone,

December 2020

I hope you're all keeping well and looking forward to Christmas and the new year. To me it feels like this year has gone by extremely quickly, although at other times it may have felt like it was dragging on! In November I was unlucky enough to contract Covid-19, which necessitated two weeks of self-isolation for myself, one member of staff (sorry David) and the whole team of trainees. I will spare you the full account of my two weeks, suffice to say that I spent it recovering and dreaming of returning to work on one of our incredible reserves. We have been taking all precautions with PPE and social distancing throughout the pandemic and I'm at least pleased to say I didn't pass it on to any other staff!

Having returned to full duties a couple of weeks ago, I was fortunate enough to witness a murmuration of starlings as we packed up our tools to leave site. I have to say that it was one of the most spectacular sights I could hope for and left me feeling reinvigorated. I may not yet be back to full strength but I'm extremely excited and cautiously optimistic for what the new year holds. I am looking forward to seeing you all out on the reserves and I know the trainees are all eager to get acquainted. I'll let them all introduce themselves later on in this issue!

Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year!

Iain Turbin, Practical Land Management Officer

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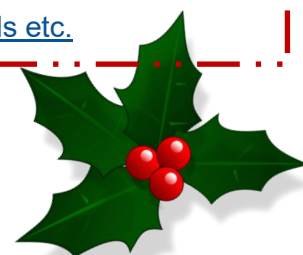
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Volunteering procedures reminder:

As of 2nd December, Worcestershire is in Tier 2.

We have re-started the majority of our volunteering opportunities under same rules as pre-lockdown2.0 - i.e. the "rule of six" - and you must book onto a volunteering session via the work party leader in advance to help us manage this. If you're unsure who to contact, get in touch with Iain (email address above).

If you live in a Tier 3 area, we are asking you not to travel into a Tier 2 area in order to volunteer with us.

National news: The Wildlife Trust's movement-wide impact report

It's that time of year again; the moment we think about the real impact our work has. With the publication of the movement-wide impact report, [Our year for wildlife](#), it's also a moment of celebration as we contemplate the wild places cared for and thousands of people connected to nature, all thanks to The Wildlife Trusts. Take a look at the report here:

https://issuu.com/wildlifetrusts/docs/20oct_impact_report_19-20_hr_web_si_bbc6f58f5c1549



For more information contact volunteer@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org or call 01905 754919

2020 Hindsight - by Colin Raven, Director

(or 'a bit of an overview of the crazy year' said Emma)

Having consulted the Specsavers website (other opticians are available), I can confirm that **20/20 Hindsight** is a phrase meaning it is easy for one to be knowledgeable about an event after it has happened. It also allows one to learn from their mistakes. **20/20 Vision** indicates that an individual has a visual acuity of 20/20 or normal eyesight from 20 feet (or 6m in Europe, not that we need to worry about metres post-Brexit!).



So, with the benefit of hindsight, what have we learned this year?

That despite everything that the pandemic has thrown at us, everyone involved in the Trust has dealt admirably with difficult circumstances - volunteers, trustees and staff. That the value we place on nature in our lives has, if anything, been strengthened and millions of others have come to appreciate nature. That we have all found new ways to engage in the work of the Trust, which have also enabled new audiences to get involved. That the value of our nature reserves for both wildlife and people has never been greater, but we face future challenges to manage that balance. That everyone has greatly missed interacting with the other great people who work and volunteer for the Trust and we are all looking forward to the resumption of our normal activities.

Despite (or even because of) everything that has happened in 2020, perhaps some really important changes will ensue. Have we learned the lessons of the last 100 years that have led to global ecological and climate crises? Is there an increasingly shared vision of a future where humankind and the rest of the planet can live in balance? Will now be the moment that real concerted action is taken to address these huge challenges?

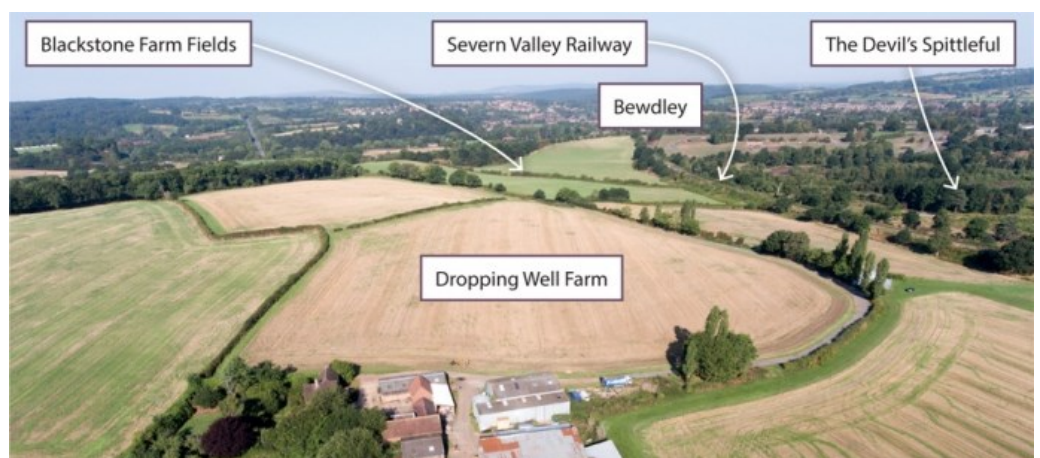
Certainly, this feels like the best opportunity in my lifetime. The challenge for us all is to continue to do our bit to make change happen.

Thank you for all you have done in 2020. Best wishes for Christmas and for 2021.

Colin

Saving Worcestershire's Heathlands Appeal update

We have raised all the match-funds needed to apply to the National Lottery Heritage Fund to purchase and restore the 95 acres of land at Dropping Well Farm near Kidderminster. Despite the current situation and economic uncertainty for many, this has been our most successful land purchase appeal to date. We have submitted



our final application to the Heritage Fund for support and expect to hear from them in March. All being well, the Trust will own the land at Dropping Well Farm by June next year. This will create an amazing connected area of nature reserves of over 600 acres.

Thank you to everyone who has donated and supported our efforts by volunteering.

Fingers and toes crossed for March!

To ALL our volunteers, long-standing and newly recruited: You've all been so amazing!

Okay, so things might not have quite gone to plan this year but I've always been told that 'plans can be overrated and that if you do have to make plans, then plan to be surprised'...well we have had plenty of those this year! Yet true to form, the dedication and passion of you, our incredible volunteers, has shone through. It's been a challenging year! For some of you, you've only been able to stay connected with us by following and sharing our content online. For others, you have adapted to this 'new normal' and been able to get stuck in, learning new skills, delivering talks and events online, meeting and greeting the hordes of visitors out on reserves and helping with admin tasks from the safety of your own homes. Whether you've been able to actively volunteer with us this year or not, we are so grateful for your support and patience during these times. We have missed our volunteers hugely across the year, in all the usual (and unusual) places that we normally find you, hard at work, helping to make Worcestershire a better place for wildlife. We're all sending a HUGE virtual hug, pat on the back and joy-filled song and dance to celebrate **YOU** and all that you do for us. **Talking about songs...look out on our social media channels and YouTube on Christmas Eve for a special treat from the staff ...we ho-ho-ho-pe you enjoy it!**

Thoughts from the Finance & Admin Team...

2020 - what a mess! At the beginning of March things seemed normal apart from some bad flooding. By the end of April, we were all facing a new normal, people were told to isolate, not to mix, not to touch, do not go to work. Little did we know how long this would go on for; we still have no idea.

Our committed and dedicated team of volunteer receptionists still do not know when they will be able to return, reception isn't the same without them, although we do our best.

We would like to say thank you to each and every one of them. Thank you for sharing your skills and knowledge to help improve what we do at the Wildlife Trust & Lower Smite Farm. Thank you for the kindness shown to staff & visitors. Thank you for helping us all when we need an extra pair of hands.

We're sorry we can't share moments at this time but look forward to when we can. You are all so missed!

*To all the dear receptionists,
We wanted to reach out and say,
We miss your company greatly,
Each and every day.*

*Working in the office
Leaves us feeling quite remote,
I am sure this is a feeling we share,
As we are all in the same boat.*

*Thank you for all the work you do,
We can't wait for you to get back,
The filing emails and shredding,
Await you in a plentiful stack.*

*We miss your friendly smiles
And your dulcet tones
It has been quite a task
To maintain the emails & the telephones.*

*Christmas is upon us
A joyful time of year
We would like to raise the proverbial glass
And a socially distanced cheer.*

*All that's left for us to say
Is we can't wait for your return
Although we don't have a date in the diary yet
It is one for which we all yearn!*

Julie and Anne would also like to say a huge thank you to all of the volunteers who have continued to support the membership team during 2020.

From helping to input the responses to the membership survey into Survey Monkey, to helping with issuing renewal letters. It has been a huge help and has meant that we haven't missed sending out any membership letters this year.

Faces of the future - introducing our trainees



Hi, I'm Issy and I have been working at the Trust since late September. In that time I have been immersed in everything practical conservation related and have enjoyed every minute of it! Before starting the traineeship, I didn't know anything about power tools and fencing nor did I appreciate how much maintenance work is required to keep the reserves functioning for the public.

Now, nearly four months in, and I'm rather handy with a drill, have built several fences and much more! Over the past few weeks, now we have all settled in, we are taking opportunities in other departments of the Trust. This includes conducting surveys with the ecological consultancy team in the spring and creating content for our social media for the communications team, both of which I am very keen to get involved in.

Hi everyone! I'm Jake. I'm currently studying environmental science at university and prior to this traineeship I was volunteering with Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, which is where I live.

My traineeship is approaching its third month and I already feel like my knowledge and ability has improved in leaps and bounds. One area I feel my knowledge has improved in the most is woodland management; my experience before the traineeship was focused on meadow and heathland regeneration as that was the habitat I volunteered in the most. Since the traineeship has started, I've been lucky enough to spend a considerable amount of time at Monkwood. Here, I have been completing deer surveys, coppicing, way-marker installing and wardening. It's been great to learn about why we coppice and thin woodland in certain areas, have a coppice plot rotation and to understand the role this habitat management has on the biodiversity of the woodland.

I look forward to getting to know you all during my time here and continue learning along the way, together!



Hello! I'm Ruthie. My traineeship was due to start in April of this year but due to the Covid situation, it was postponed until September. Now, nearly four months in, I've already gained so much in terms of practical conservation experience and I cannot wait to see what the rest of the year has in store!

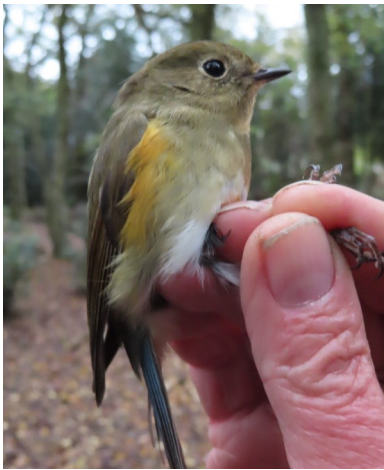
There is no typical day of this traineeship as the tasks vary widely! From driving Trust vehicles to soil sampling, constructing management plans to writing blog posts, fixing fences and surveying dormice, there is never a dull moment or a shortfall in work to do! Having volunteered for several NGOs in the past I am no stranger to such a variety of work and therefore remain open-minded about any opportunities thrown my way as I love to get involved!



Hello everyone, I'm Amy. I first started volunteering here nearly two years ago with the Outdoor Origins youth group and I have recently taken on a supervisor role here. I enjoyed working with the youth group so much that when the traineeship came up, I immediately applied! It has allowed me to build on my experience that I gained from the youth group and take it to the next level, learning so much more about management and conservation. When I first started volunteering, I was a super-duper nervous, timid individual and I am so much more outgoing and confident.

One of my highlights from the traineeship so far is when we were working at Gwen Finch as we saw so much wildlife. We spotted roe deer, toads, herons, cormorants and even a murmuration when we were getting ready to leave. It is so rewarding being able to see the impacts that we are already having on reserves and I can't wait to see what the upcoming months have in store for us!





Eastern Reserves Update *by Ellie Reast, Reserves Officer*

At the end of October, Lion Wood, a small woodland in the northeast of the county, became a bit of a hit for birders. The reason? A red-flanked bluetail was ringed by a couple of volunteers who ring regularly at the reserve (seen here in the hand of one of the ringers). The species breed in Siberia and should overwinter in southeast Asia but a small number come to western Europe each year and are now annual visitors to the UK, although only in small numbers. Our visitor to Lion Wood was the first time one has been seen in Worcestershire and the West Midlands, hence the excitement.

Ipsley Alders has seen a lot of activity over the last few months. The rickety old fencing in the northern compartment has been replaced and the longhorn cattle on site now have brand new drinking troughs.



In August, Paul Meers over at Feckenham Wylde Moor spent some time watching a Brown hairstreak butterfly nectaring on the meadowsweet....and it seemed to be showing its appreciation for all the hard work volunteers have done managing blackthorn, its foodplant, by posing next to the Trust logo!

As with all the Reserve Officers, I've been missing heading out to reserves with you all. I've been out and about – just lately to a misty Humpy meadow (see below) – but it's not quite the same on your tod!

Roll on the new year!

Photos: Top © Dennis Cooper, left © Lenin Villacreses, below x 3 © Eleanor Reast



The Wildlife Trusts' new president, vice president and ambassadors

The Wildlife Trusts welcome broadcaster and biologist, Liz Bonnin, who has been elected as our movement's President. The first woman to take the role, Liz joins the movement of 46 Wildlife Trusts at a critical time for nature's recovery in the UK. Liz will be championing The Wildlife Trusts' new **30 by 30** vision to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030 with projects ranging from land acquisition to peatland restoration and species reintroduction.

The Wildlife Trusts are also delighted to announce that BBC's Springwatch presenter and life-long nature fan Gillian Burke has become vice president – and welcome young birder Mya-Rose Craig, actor David Oakes, broadcaster Cel Spellman and insect expert Dave Goulson as wildlife ambassadors.

Craig Bennett, chief executive of The Wildlife Trusts says:

"I'm thrilled to welcome Liz Bonnin as the new president of The Wildlife Trusts. It's a critical time for our natural world and we face a huge challenge in tackling the ecological and climate crises – so it's vital that we have the best people working alongside us. Liz is keen to fight our corner and she leads an invigorated team of honorary roles – all passionate people who will help make nature matter to wider, more diverse audiences. Thank you to Liz, Gillian, David, Mya-Rose, Cel and Dave for joining us to stand up for the natural world!"

Read all about our new president, vice president and ambassadors on TWTs website:

www.wildlifetrusts.org/news/wildlife-trusts-welcome-liz-bonnin-new-president

Northern Reserves Update *by Andy Harris, Reserves Officer*

There is a lot going on at the moment, organising and supervising contractors on reserves, in part thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Emergency Funding we received to cover costs of some of the lost work this year. There are contractors working at Chaddesley, The Devil's Spittleful and Penorchard as I write.

The trees that have recently been felled along the right of way that goes to Chaddesley village in the centre of the wood are mostly ash. Ash die-back is starting to impact on the wood and we have removed these ones for safety reasons, either because they are over, or within reach of, a right of way. The timber is still good at present (a year or two down the line it will turn to mush and be worthless) and we are selling it as forestry certified firewood via the Tiddesley Wood log sales. Ash is a very fast grower and is often seen as a nurse crop rather like silver birch. Therefore many of the ash trees are not that old, despite their size. Unfortunately many of the younger ash are also suffering and saplings have visibly dead stems. We are also removing a few other trees in that area, including a dead larch by path (for safety reasons) and some birch that are crowding out some nice oak.

Work has commenced to thin a section of woodland within sight of the gate and information board. This is a standard 'thin' - removing some oak and other hardwoods to promote the growth of other oaks and hardwoods. In this area we even have lime and wild service tree growing. These will be protected and we aim to end up with a variety of sized trees, some that are good for wildlife and some good for future timber. The work will look brutal but overall it benefits the wood. Most woodland species have evolved to rely on light and this only occurs by the actions of large (now extinct) herbivores, severe storms, wildfires (not common these days as our landscape has less true grassland than historically) and human action (which has involved felling trees for two million years).

In other news, we have managed to keep some volunteer roles going for much of the year and some volunteers have been able to help considerably with wardening on our reserves, tackling problems as they arise, such as new paths being created by the ten-fold increase in visitors. We have installed new rights of way markers in some reserves to help with this.

However, on some reserves the lack of volunteer activity is really highlighting just how much we rely on your help. On a few sites I have noticed an increase in the amount of scrub encroaching on precious and rare open habitat e.g. heath, marsh and grassland. The Devil's Spittleful is an obvious example where we typically have up to 24 large work parties a year – this year we have, I believe, had only six to date!

I have enjoyed the contact I have had with those that have been able to volunteer and missed everyone else. Let's hope more normality will return soon.



Western Reserves Update *by Dom Cragg, Reserves Officer*

Monkwood – forestry work has been ongoing since the end of October and is finally coming to an end. We've been catching up with work that we couldn't do last year because of how wet the ground was, so it's been a lengthy contract this year and you'll certainly notice the difference next time you visit! We've thinned a section of the roadside for safety reasons (there were a number of infected ash within falling distance of the road) as well as to get lots more light to the woodland floor. This area hadn't been touched for a while and as a result was getting pretty shady. The sunlight will encourage bulbs and seeds that have been hiding under the soil waiting for the right conditions to appear; hopefully we'll see flowers like bluebells, wood anemone and wood spurge here next spring. We've also felled selected trees within coppice plots to allow the hazel understorey to flourish.

Trench Wood – forestry work has just begun here and will capitalise on the fantastic coppicing that the Trench volunteers, roving volunteers and our youth groups started last winter to open up the forestry compartments. We're working in a couple of areas of the wood that are wall-to-wall silver birch and/or ash, which have grown up competing for light becoming leggy and top-heavy because of it. To create areas of high forest or coppice with standards, we'll fell patches of the birch and halo-thin around any mature trees that are in amongst these youngsters. This will mean that the birch and mature oak, ash and poplar that are left will have much more light, nutrients and space to extend their branches out rather than upwards. Of course, any dead or rotting trees will be left where they are as brilliant dead wood habitats that support fungi, roosting bats and nesting birds.



Adapting to the 'new normal': an overview from the Engagement Team

by Nick Packham, Senior Engagement Officer

The engagement team has adapted quite a lot over the past few months with various lockdown rules not allowing us to engage with people directly. We've had to find creative ways in engaging with our various audiences - including families, schoolchildren, adults and youth - by running events online and producing lots of fun online content for Twitter, Facebook and our website, ensuring we have entertaining, engaging content for everyone (please do take a look at our social media channels if you're not already doing so).

With many leisure and recreational venues closed over lockdown, more and more people were venturing out onto our nature reserves, which has been really good in terms of giving people the opportunity to connect with nature but has also meant that some of our most popular sites have seen unprecedented numbers of people. This resulted in some reserves needing a staff presence, so thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Emergency Fund, the Trust has been able to employ two Warden Officers who sit within our team. Their role is to help support our busiest areas whilst engaging people and talking to them about the amazing wildlife seen on our nature reserves, helping to fuel passion for the natural world. Sue and Lauren will be with us until February, so keep an eye out for them on some of our busier reserves. A large number of volunteers have also supported us in a similar way, acting as a presence on our reserves, talking to visitors, feeding back issues to us and being our eyes on the ground - we are so grateful for all this help during these challenging times. We hope to build on these volunteer wardening roles over the next year, enabling many of you to share your passion and enthusiasm for wildlife more widely with our visitors.

Over the year, we have had some great responses to the online events we've run within the team primarily for families and we have plans to run online youth events too. We are also investing in technology and training to better equip us to produce more engaging digital content. To compliment our online content we are developing more outreach resources for schools, youth groups and community groups, so that they can independently run their own sessions designed to bring people closer to nature and learn more about the wildlife around where people live. All in all, it's been a busy year and we've learnt a lot about different ways of connecting with a wider audience...but we must admit, along with all the successes, the engagement team are looking forward to 2021 when we can hopefully resume face-to-face events and activities!



Check out some of our online engagement materials on our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages, or click the images above for an example of our 'meet our team' videos (lots of our staff have done one - more to come in the New Year - so scroll through our social media feeds to find out all about us!), test your ID skills with our 'Monday Mysteries' (ID the species from a small snapshot - as in the middle picture), or make your own natural Christmas decorations!

From face-to-face, to filming: engagement with families

by Sadie Carr-Simons, Events and Campaign Officer

In a year where you can't see people, the engagement team has had to adapt quite quickly! As the Events and Campaigns Officer, with a year's worth of cancelled events I have instead kept myself busy by producing new content for our social media pages. We've seen a big increase in how people engage with us on these channels over the last few months so it's been important to keep producing interesting, informative content. But there is nothing quite like a real life event, especially for families whose children aren't able to engage with us through social media. So with the help of our wonderful engagement volunteers, particularly Sue Duffield and Mary Bendall, we have started to run some online digital events. Just for families with children, our first event 'All about Poo, and owls and feathers too' proved to be very popular with 15 families signing up to watch an owl pellet dissection, meet a barn owl and look at some model poo and guess who it belonged to! We also ran a Christmas quiz and are planning to put on more events in the new year. Both myself, my colleague Marissa and our volunteers said how lovely it was to see real people interacting with us and getting excited about wildlife, something we've all missed a lot this year. So let's hope there will be much more of it in 2021!

Outdoor Origins Youth Group *by Ben Rees, Youth Engagement Officer*

This year has been a bit of a rollercoaster for the Outdoor Origins youth volunteer group. We had a great start at the beginning of the year, working on our new Outdoor Origins biodiversity corner at Lower Smite Farm as well as getting out and recording over 100 toads (and a few frogs and newts) between the ponds on the farm, which was fantastic! Then lockdown struck and all face-to-face engagement had to stop. Although this was less than ideal, the group has kept going and kept in touch with the Trust and each other through our social media platforms. Over lockdown, members kept busy with their own wildlife adventures, from watching hedgehogs in their back gardens to installing wildlife ponds, as well as doing a bit of wildlife photography!



Despite these challenges, we have gained eight new members this year and as soon as it was safe to do so, and with safety measures in place (including the addition of our new portable 'tippy tap' to allow us to wash our hands remotely with soap and water), we were able to get back to doing practical sessions again!! (YAY!) We have been undertaking important management work at a few of our nature reserves as well as continuing to improve the Outdoor Origins biodiversity area at Lower Smite Farm, which after a few months left to its own devices was in need of a bit of TLC! We were also lucky enough to get out over a few evenings to look for bats and owls and spent a cracking session watching lesser horseshoe bats swooping around The Knapp and Papermill! In December we are trialling a digital meet up via Zoom, where we hope to discuss our plans for the coming year.

With an enthusiastic and energetic team, robust safety measures and the ability able to run digital sessions, no matter the challenges we may face, 2021 is going to be a cracking year for the Outdoor Origins youth volunteer group!

**** Outdoor Origins success story****

A testament to our youth engagement work is highlighted by Amy, who was one of our most regular Outdoor Origins youth group members, being accepted onto the Trust's trainee programme this year. This will be a great opportunity to springboard her into a future career in nature conservation. You can read more about Amy's journey with the Trust on page 4



Opening Upton Warren - 2021 plans

Thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Emergency Fund, we are delighted to be able to open our hides at The Moors twice a week, from Thursday 7th January.

As we are only able to open to a small number of people, based on our Covid-secure assessment, there will be two sessions, two days a week and numbers will be limited to 12 people per session. Social distancing measures will be in place and hand sanitiser will be available in each hide. We ask people to wear a face mask whilst in the hides if you are able to do so.

Visits are currently only available for Worcestershire Wildlife Trust members – we will need your membership number at the time of booking and you should bring your membership card with you when you visit. We know that more people will want to visit than are able to at the moment so we apologise to anyone who misses out and is disappointed.

For all the information about the sessions or to book a slot: visit www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on

Natural Networks Project – Round-up of a hectic year!

Words and pictures by Jasmine Walters & Sean Webber, Natural Networks Project Officers

2020 has been a busy year for the Natural Networks Officers, with another 37 organisations registering with the programme and advice given for biodiversity enhancement on around 800 hectares of land. Organisations including parish councils, district councils, small businesses and community groups have been busy forging ahead with our recommendations. This year they have all helped to achieve:



- planting of nearly 4,000 shrubs and trees
- creation or enhancement of 15 ponds and wetlands
- creation or enhancement of approximately 500m of brook channel
- installation of six hibernacula, one otter holt, three bee banks & 120 wildlife boxes



Some personal highlights from our time out surveying on the many project sites include spotting a harvest mouse nest (pictured) on a cold January morning at a new woodland managed by Heart of England Forest in east Worcestershire and finding over a dozen brown hairstreak butterfly eggs on blackthorn in November at Westall Park Natural Burial Ground near Redditch. Following our guidance, the blackthorn there is now being managed specifically to benefit this species.

A Butterfly Conservation volunteer even spotted a dingy skipper butterfly at Shatterford Woods in the Wyre Forest in May, after Natural Networks helped Forestry England to improve habitat for the butterfly. This is the first time this species has been recorded at the site and is a direct result of a project to create flower-rich sunny rides and glades within the woodland.

It is very rewarding to see the habitats involved with Natural Networks are supporting such a great range of wildlife and we look forward to more of the same in 2021.



Our Festive Puzzle on the next page shows where we've been working! Give it a try!



Annual Volunteer Survey - have your say

It's that time again - your chance to give us your feedback on your volunteering experiences. From how and when we communicate with you to your requests for training opportunities, our volunteer survey is hugely important in shaping your volunteering experience.

This year, for the first time, we will also be adding in some additional equality, diversity & inclusion questions which will help us to learn more about our volunteers. The results of these questions (which are optional) will help underpin our work around improving the diversity of people we engage with, highlighting different opportunities to reach out to new and wider audiences. Your responses to these questions will remain anonymous and confidential and will only be used for these purposes, so we would really appreciate your input with these questions alongside the other questions which are focussed on your volunteering experience.

Heads-up! Look out for your Volunteer Survey landing in your inbox very soon!

Here is a map of the projects our Natural Networks Officers have visited this year.

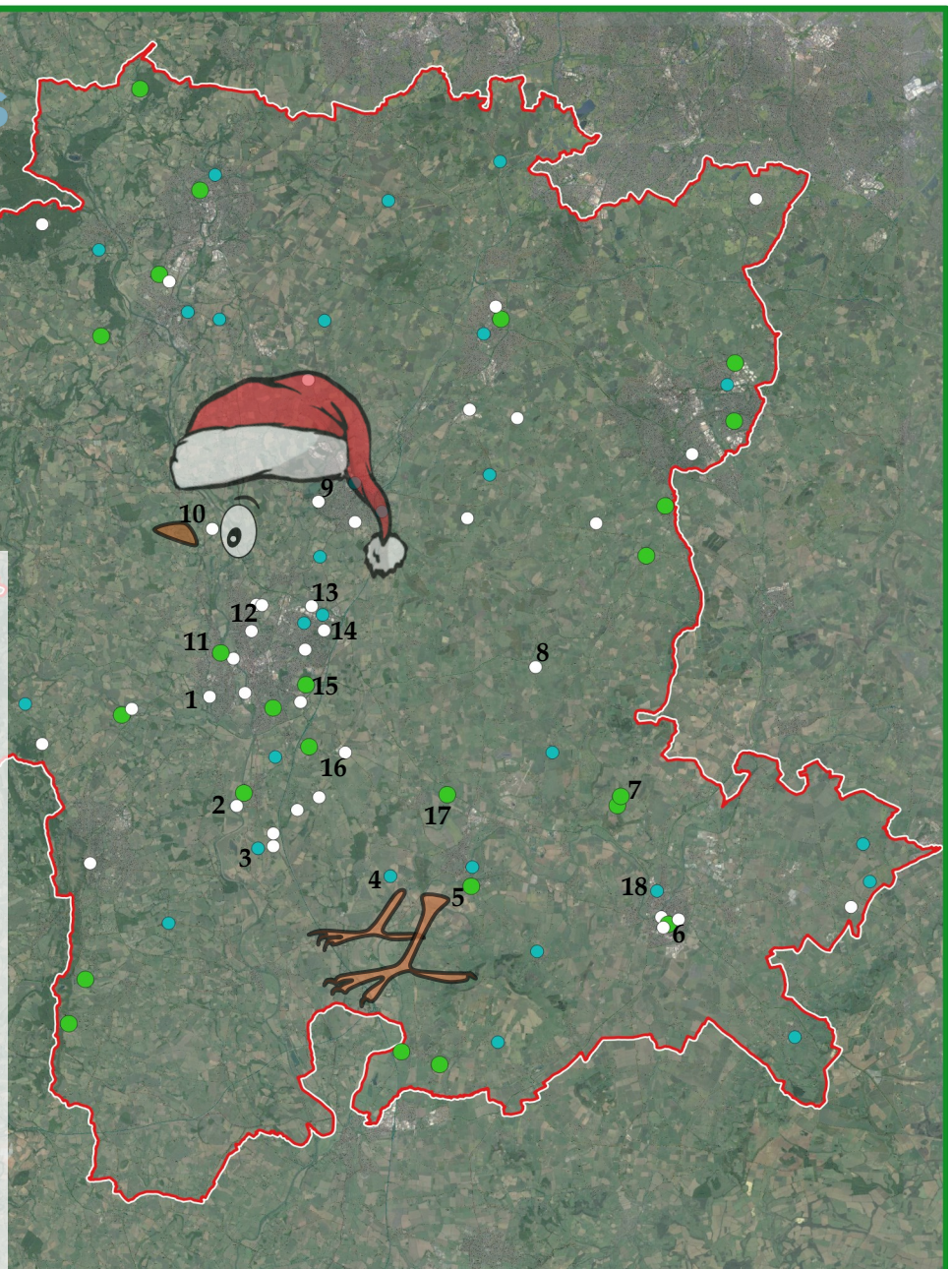
What do the dots mean?

Projects with biodiversity enhancements underway

Projects who are preparing a grant application to carry out biodiversity enhancements

Projects we have given biodiversity enhancement advice to

JOIN THE DOTS to reveal some local wildlife!



Natural Networks is a partnership programme between Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and Worcestershire County Council, offering advice and grants to organisations who wish to enhance biodiversity in Worcestershire. By the end of the programme we hope that the biodiversity enhancement projects we help will begin to link and create wildlife corridors across the county.

For more information please visit: www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/natural-networks



Forestry work on our reserves - what's it all about?!

Each autumn and winter we undertake forestry work in many of our woodland nature reserves. Our updates from the reserves officers are often focussed on this but there is not always space to fully explain the importance of this forestry work and how it helps wildlife. If you'd like to know more, check out our short video on forestry work, explained by David

www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXshCmg-cWk&t=2s

Wild about Education! by Marissa Ryland, Schools Engagement Officer

Our engagement team are recruiting for a brand new volunteer role, created to help us expand our education work in local schools. We hear more from Marissa Ryland:

Our education work so far:

As some of you will know, I work in the engagement team as the Schools Engagement Officer. For the last five years I have been running the school visits to Lower Smite Farm and The Knapp and Papermill. We have run a successful outdoor education service for over 30 years and this also includes outreach into school settings. We typically meet nearly 4,000 children every year, mostly from primary schools, encouraging them to connect with, explore and discover their local wild places and wildlife. We run a range of activities with our most popular being pond dipping, our cooking and plant growth programmes and our rocks and soils day that includes a challenge from a geologist asking the children to save her rock collection from rock robbers! During



lockdown we have been reviewing our school work to begin creating a new strategy to consolidate and grow the work we do with our school communities. We ran a large online school survey to collect a range of data about our current offers and what schools would like from us. Through this work we identified some key learning strands schools wanted help with. These include wellbeing, learning about wildlife and taking literacy and numeracy outside. We are now partnering with two schools to explore these topics in more detail and begin to trial potential new projects and services with them that can then be taken out to more schools.

A new volunteer role:

Although we have plenty of experience working with children outdoors and have lots of wildlife knowledge, we know less about literacy and numeracy. This has led us to look for a volunteer with recent primary school experience to work alongside us and our partner schools to develop fun and curriculum focussed activities to take maths and English lessons outdoors. This is a home-based role and the volunteer will not need to go into school unless they feel comfortable to do so (Covid rules and risk assessment dependent). It is flexible and can be completed over four hours in a fortnight.

If you are interested in finding out more, find the role on our website (along with all our current volunteer opportunities) here: www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/volunteering-opportunities or feel free to get in touch with me via email marissa@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org.

Farming is Changing *by Caroline Corsie, Senior Land Advisor*

The Agriculture Act 2020: A Landmark moment for our countryside, wildlife, and food security:

The last Agriculture Act passed in the United Kingdom was in 1947. 73 years later, a brand-new Agriculture Act, which received Royal Assent on 11th November 2020, will begin in 2021 to transition away from EU-based rules and the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) over a seven-year period.

Replacing Direct Payments and existing agri-environment schemes, the Environmental Land Management (E.L.M.) scheme will pay farmers and land managers for delivering public goods for public money. This includes actions to improve the environment, promote animal health and welfare, and reduce carbon emissions. Grants and other support for enhancing farm productivity and prosperity will accompany the ELMs payments. These will have more effective and trusted regulatory processes and enforcement but there is a long and hard journey ahead.

A three-year national pilot of the Environmental Land Management scheme beginning in 2021 will be trialling the three types of agreements at different scales that make up the scheme:

- ⇒ **The Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)** will pay for environmentally sustainable land management actions that all farmers can do. Actions will be grouped into simple packages to make it as easy as possible for farmers to identify those that are best suited to their land.
- ⇒ **Local Nature Recovery** will pay farmers and land managers for actions that support local nature recovery and deliver local environmental priorities. Local Nature Recovery agreements will be available from 2024, following a national pilot starting in 2021.
- ⇒ **Landscape Recovery** will involve bespoke agreements to support long-term, land-use change projects, including rewilding where appropriate. Pilot Landscape Recovery projects will begin between 2022 and 2024 and the full scheme will be available from 2024.

Wild LIVE: So, where next for nature and British Farming?

With the Agriculture Act now passed as law and the looming exit from the EU (with or without an EU trade deal) how will this affect British farmers and the planned agri-environment schemes to promote nature-friendly farming post-Brexit? Throughout 2020, farming and environmental groups (including The Wildlife Trusts) were united in their calls for animal welfare and environmental standards to be protected in law and while the basics of the post-Brexit agriculture policy framework have been known for some time, key details remain sketchy.



It's a lot of information to make sense of! But fear not, help is at hand! At the beginning of December, the Wildlife Trust's online 'Wild LIVE' event saw an expert panel hosted by The Wildlife Trust CEO Craig Bennett with Vicky Herd (Sustain), Minette Batters (National Farmers Union), Stephen Honeywood (Jordan's cereal) and Janet Hughes (DEFRA) delve into the issues at stake and offer their opinions on how both the farming and environmental sectors need to prepare for these transitions. If you missed it, you can catch the whole event by clicking the image above or visiting [The Wildlife Trust's YouTube channel](#). I highly recommend it as an engaging and insightful way to get to grips with some of the issues we are facing.

Playing our part:

Things are moving along at a cracking pace and we are well positioned as a movement to have our voice heard. I sit on a national Land Management Policy Group, made up of specialists, with the aim of responding and feeding back to Westminster as things progress. We at WWT are also playing a role in the DEFRA ELMS Test and Trial stages, helping to inform how the system will work. All of this sits alongside our continued work with our Wild Pollinators Facilitation Fund, which we have just extended. Find out more about our work around agriculture in Worcestershire here: www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/agriculture

Almost like a good book... *by Wendy Carter, Communications Lead*

If you haven't already done enough sitting down and kicking back this year, pop along to the blogs page of our website and catch up with folk from across the county. We've launched three new blogs over the last few months – our new conservation trainees are writing about what they're up to and how they're getting to know our wild family and reserves, several authors are contributing to our Doorstep Wildlife blog about how they're discovering the wild that's close to home and, finally, we have a new seasonal blog about what wildlife to look for as the seasons turn.

www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/blog



On the subject of Doorstep Wildlife, subscribers to our wildlife sightings e-newsletter receive monthly information about what wildlife to look for where. How do you subscribe to such a delightful nugget of info, we hear you ask? Simply upload a wildlife sighting via our online form (photo needed) and tick the 'subscribe' box. Winter is a great time to look through your photos to see what you've spotted this year. Our six target species for recording this year are 7-spot ladybird, small tortoiseshell, hummingbird hawk-moth, large red damselfly, common carder bee and marmalade hoverfly but there's room on the form to submit details of other species. We've had 175 records so far – can you help us to reach 200 for the year? www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings

Not satisfied with the short reads on our blog? Then dive into our recommended nature read reviews to pick a book or two to read during the dark and cold winter months when you may be (yet again) stuck indoors. We regularly update our recommendations so why not have a read to see what catches your eye www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/nature-reads



Need a few more cards?

Cutting down on Christmas cards?

Why not send one of our lovely e-cards instead this year? We have lots of designs to choose from, for all occasions - simply visit www.dontsendmeacard.com/charities/RITo

Do you have any volunteering video footage?

We're putting together some new short promotional films about volunteering with us - if you already have (or are happy to take) any video clips of your time volunteering that you would be happy to share with us, please get in touch with Emma (emma@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org) by the end of the year. It doesn't matter how long/short the video clips are, or whether they have sound or not, as we will edit them in as part of a bigger piece.

Thank you in advance!

Upcoming online talks

hosted by our Local Supporter Groups:

- **7th January - Wild boar in the Forest of Dean:** Discover more about wild boar just over the border in Gloucestershire with Dr John Dutton.
- **21st January - Pine Martens:** An evening of pine marten discovery with Lizzie Croose.
- **4th February - Pond Scum:** Head underwater and discover the fascinating world of ponds with Jack Perks.

Tickets & info: www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on

Merry Christmas & a happy, healthy New Year
from everyone at Worcestershire Wildlife Trust