

Bromsgrove & NE Worcestershire Winter 2020



Worcestershire
Wildlife Trust

Getting closer to nature?

As a form of compensation to lockdown, I notice there have been many nature programmes on television. Many of them are repeats but, nevertheless, more nature to see!

The BBC's Countryfile has run its yearly photographic competition, which is always lovely to see. Of course, the Trust also does similar but on a much smaller scale and it's lovely to see photos of our local wildlife.

I have also noticed a little more being said about local projects, such as our chance to recruit lost habitat in the form of heathland at Dropping Well Farm. We can only be thankful to both BBC Midlands Today and BBC Hereford & Worcester for such public exposure of a great ambition.

I am concerned, however, of the increasing encouragement to experience ever-more 'invasive' countryside activities. Whilst connecting to nature is important for us all, sometimes I feel it can venture down the wrong road!

In particular, I am concerned about the impact of wild swimming on our wildlife. More than one programme concerning nature and the environment has promoted this activity. Since the advent of Roger Deakin's book, which was much concerned with wild swimming, this new pastime has snowballed. I don't think we can worry too much about someone who occasionally wishes to swim in a section of river but when I hear of clubs being formed, I feel that my worries about wildlife disturbance become justified. It's ironic to consider that

Roger Deakin himself suggested to participate using only the breast stroke as it is quieter and less disturbing to river life! Many believe that wild swimming is not a good thing to do especially in more sensitive places - isolated Scottish hill lochs would be one obvious example where, for the sake of a wild swim, the breeding success of a red-throated diver could be highly compromised. Regular activity in rivers may cause otters, fish and river birds to move to other places.

Our waterways, although much used, are not a person's natural environment. The pressures on our watery wildlife are already great - from pollution to the growing popularity of boating, fishing and wild camping close to the water's edge.

I completely understand a need to experience a more intimate relationship with nature but appeal to everyone to give wild swimming a miss (although I expect that most of you already realise the potential consequences of it). We should enjoy nature in distant or close observation but not by disturbing its own, exclusive habitat.

I hope you're all able to take solace in the outdoors in what is likely to be a strange season for us all. Please stay safe, have a lovely Christmas and I hope to see you in person before too long.

*Best wishes
Gordon*

your Local Group Chairman

Indoor meetings

Our online talks are going well and we'd love to see you there. Our December talks are below and we're busy organising a series of online talks for Jan-Mar 2021. Please visit our website for the latest information and details of how to book your place.

www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on

Thur Dec 3rd Ed Drewitt - Urban Peregrines

Thur Dec 17th Michael Leach - A Natural History of Christmas

Pond restoration at Piper's Hill and Dodderhill Common

Great crested newt © Fred Holmes ARC Trust



The pond at Piper's Hill supports a range of species including dragonflies, great crested newts and numerous invertebrates that are adapted to living underwater. Over time the bulrush had spread significantly and was reducing the amount of open water and overcrowding other plant species. We also wanted to remove as much floating pennywort as possible. This South American plant is extremely invasive, out-competing our native plants by blocking out light and reducing oxygen levels. Work began in mid-October and by creating more open water and

allowing a wider variety of plant species to come through we have created more opportunities for wildlife.

The contractors spent four days working on it with amphibious tanks (see picture). We last worked on the pond in 2004 so although this will be disruptive in the short term, and it will stay silty for a couple of weeks, it should have settled down by the time you read this and will be much better for biodiversity in the long run. We chose late autumn to carry out the works because this is when there will be fewest amphibians in the water to disturb. By October the young amphibians will have had time to metamorphose and leave the pond but adult frogs won't yet have returned to the pond to hibernate. We had an ecologist on site to monitor the works and material removed from the water was temporarily left onsite to allow creatures to escape back into the pond unharmed.



So forgive the temporary 'milky tea' look of the pond but over the next few years there will be lots more life in and around it! The work also gave us an opportunity to remove at least six tyres, an industrial press and a skateboard!

Eleanor Reast
Reserves Officer (East)