



special treat when 66 waxwings visited her garden to feast on the berries of her guelder rose and a hawfinch was seen drinking from the stream (see photo). Her pond is a focus for wildlife throughout the year with water shrews, frogs, dragonflies, water-measurers, backswimmers, aquatic springtails and many other creatures.

Dropping Well Farm and Heathlands, by Rob Allen and Charlie Bird

Dropping Well Farm is, hopefully, going to be a recent acquisition by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and is adjacent to The Devil's Spittleful and Blackstone Farm Fields, which makes it valuable as a means of linking two existing reserves. Rob Allen (Reserves Team Leader) explained how heathlands were formed and how they used to be grazed by large roaming animals like mammoths and bison. These days we use cattle and sheep! 85% of our British heathlands have been lost since 1800 so the ecological value of this habitat is enormous. Rob mentioned several species that thrive there: butterflies, stonechats, skylarks, common lizards, grass snakes and various bees – it's hoped that nightjars can be tempted to return. Conservation is often about providing habitat for common species, not just focussing on rarities. Charlie Bird (Project Development Officer) described how innovative and creative management techniques would be needed over a long period to turn the farm into a mosaic of suitable habitats. It is an opportunity to engage with and educate volunteers and the community as well as increase Worcestershire's heathlands by 20%. A new nature trail is planned to give access and very long-term vision is needed to manage the site.

For more information and photographs visit www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/heathland-hero.

Malvern Lost Fritillaries Project, by Mel Mason

In 1852 there were 47 species of butterfly recorded on the Malvern Hills including the large tortoiseshell, the Camberwell beauty and the black-veined white butterflies. Sadly many of these have become locally or nationally extinct. 30 years ago we still had pearl-bordered, small pearl-bordered and high brown fritillaries on the Malverns but even those have vanished. What has gone wrong?

Mel Mason is a dedicated butterfly enthusiast and Vice-Chairman of West Midlands Butterfly Conservation. For the last six years he has devoted time and energy to the conservation of the grayling butterfly, a rare species that

still occurs on the rocky areas of North Hill. He is now developing a project to reintroduce the pearl-bordered fritillary to the Malvern Hills, specifically to three former strongholds : Swinyard Hill, Eastnor and Chase End Hill. A great deal of preparatory work has been done, including securing support from Butterfly Conservation, Natural England and local landowners. Donor sites have been identified and surveyed at Ewyas Harold in Herefordshire and the Wyre Forest in Worcestershire. In May and June this year a thorough survey was made of the flora on the three receptor sites; it is essential that bracken is present as it suppresses scrub and grass and provides the warmth of bracken litter at ground level. Desirable nectar plants include bugle, ground ivy, bird's-foot trefoil, dandelion and violet. Mel is asking volunteers to grow more violets and help with the captive larval breeding programme over winter, ready for release in 2021 and ensuing years.



It would be a delight to us all to see a return of pearl-bordered fritillaries to the southern Hills and we wish Mel and his team every success.

Wildlife on the Doorstep, by Nick Martin

Nick works part-time for Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and lives just outside Knowle in the West Midlands. During lockdown, like many of us, he explored the wildlife on his patch. At the bottom of his suburban garden is a small stream that is a corridor for surprisingly diverse wildlife. His splendid photographs and videos from his camera traps set up along the nearby River Blythe, revealed native species like otters, kingfisher, herons, badgers and foxes as well as introduced mink, muntjac deer and the American signal crayfish that provided food for a passing buzzard. He could follow the fortunes of wild families, like the mallard's ten ducklings reduced to none by predation!

It was heartening to see that just an ordinary patch of land not far from a large conurbation and motorways could support such a range of wildlife.

Further afield Nick showed us the delights of nearby woods and parks. Oversley Wood near Alcester was alive with butterflies including some unusual ones like the purple hairstreak, purple emperor (not photographed) and silver-washed fritillary. Sutton Park to the north of Birmingham held a surprise – a red-backed shrike!

Throughout the talk Nick's humour and spontaneity were lively and infectious.

Contributions

Please send any ideas or contributions for future Newsletters to the editor alison.uren@gmail.com or phone 01684 567819



Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

Malvern Group

Winter 2020

www.malverngroup.btck.co.uk
malverngroup@live.co.uk

Welcome to the Malvern Group

Alison Uren (Chairman)

What a difficult year! However, we have all done our best to survive with smiles on our faces. It's been an opportunity to enjoy our local wildlife even more than we usually do. We've had thousands of visitors to the Malvern Hills and other nearby beauty spots like The Knapp and Papermill reserve (all very welcome – except for those that leave litter!).

We (the committee) have communicated with you all as best we can, notably with our Online Newsletter in May, to which 38 of you contributed. We then had a bumper edition of the Summer Newsletter with colour photos. Sorry – back to normal now but the good news is that we are running Online Talks every fortnight on Zoom in conjunction with all the other local groups around the county. These help to fill the gap left by not having regular Indoor Meetings. The talks are excellent and if you haven't watched one, you are missing something. There are brief reports of the first four talks in this Newsletter. Go to www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on for a full list of future talks, which will continue into 2021. It explains there how to book and make a suggested donation of £2.50.

Outdoor Events 2021

As we look forward and hope for better times, the following trips that were arranged for 2020 have provisionally been rescheduled for 2021. If you wish to enquire further or are interested in being added to any list, then please ring Margaret Vernon on 01684 565079.

Local guided walks will be arranged when it is possible to do so and you will be kept informed. **Make sure you are on our email list: send address to malverngroup@live.co.uk** (you can unsubscribe at any time).

Saturday April 10th: Great Bustard Project, Salisbury Plain; Hawk Conservancy Trust, Andover. Two places available. Estimated cost: £42 (includes entry of £27 [£15+£12] to both sites. Depart from Splash at 07.15 (return mid-eve). Morning visit with supervised access, using Landrover transport, to the hide to observe the great bustards. Afternoon visit to the Hawk Conservancy Trust with the opportunity to see various birds of prey with flying demonstrations and possibly handling experiences. Bring packed lunch or buy at the Hawk Conservancy Trust.

Tuesday April 20th: Moccas Park with Paul Rutter. This is the replacement for Savernake Forest. Three places available. Depart from Splash at 08.00 (return mid-eve). Bring packed lunch. Estimated cost: £22 (includes cost of guide, £8pp). Moccas deer park is hidden away in the Herefordshire countryside and is one of the first parkland/wood pasture SSSIs. Across its 139 ha. it has over 200 ancient and veteran

oak and sweet chestnut trees, managed today by Natural England as a National Nature Reserve.

There is no public access, so the trees are able to shed branches, allowing nature to shape these fine specimens as they mature over the centuries, so it has retained a valuable and all too scarce habitat. Despite its isolated location, Kilvert visited and wrote about the park in his diary in 1876 and made many visits to record the unique wildlife that is found there and, in some cases, nowhere else in Britain. This includes the Moccas beetle that lives inside the trunk of some of the largest oak trees. The unchanged landscape of the park is an opportunity to enjoy a truly ancient landscape largely untouched by modern agriculture or 20th century progress. Paul is involved in the management of Moccas Park.

All three Isle of Mull trips are full but reserve lists are operating:

Saturday 24th – Saturday 1st May 2021
Saturday 8th – Saturday 15th May 2021
Saturday 15th – Saturday 22nd May 2021

We shall stay near Fionnphort on the south-west corner of Mull, in good quality self-catering accommodation, with one day sailing to visit Staffa and Lunga and one day to Iona. A visit to Ulva is also a possibility. In addition, we shall cover as much of the Ross of Mull area as we are able to. We expect to see golden eagle, sea eagle, puffins and other sea birds and would hope to see otters and corncrakes. Flora and fauna will be of interest to us too.

Online Talks September and October 2020

Reports by Alison Uren and Christine Seymour

A Garden for Wildlife, by Rosemary Winnall

Rosemary Winnall is a very well-known Worcestershire naturalist and one of the principal authors and editors of the book *The Nature of Wyre*. She lives near Bewdley and this talk was about her beautiful garden and how she manages it for the benefit of wildlife. She covered an enormous amount in 40 minutes and showed us many of her excellent photographs, illustrating how she supports wildlife throughout the year. In the winter bees are attracted to her winter-flowering heathers and the mahonia provides nectar for birds. There are early-flowering prunus and hellebores. In the spring she puts out nest material in boxes for the birds to use and she encourages native plants to flower, such as white dead-nettle, garlic mustard and lady's smock. Perennials are carefully selected to attract pollinators. In the summer the buddleia attracts butterflies and the lavender is much loved by bumblebees and cinnamon bugs. In the autumn there are berries on the hawthorn, dogwood, rowan, holly and yew trees for the birds to eat. In 2005 she had a