



Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

Stourbridge & Hagley Local Group

Newsletter December 2020



Welcome to your winter newsletter. I hope everyone has stayed safe and well since we last met in February. There are no plans at present (October) to meet in our usual venue. In the absence of our meetings, we're working with other Local Groups to run online talks. These are going well and coming up are 3rd December - Urban Peregrines - and on 17th December when you can learn about A Natural History of Christmas. www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on for more details and how to book a place.

It seemed a good idea to take a look at other local conservation groups in our area. If you were on the Roman Road walk a couple of years ago you will remember Joy Stevens who started the Scarlet Tiger Project volunteer group. Joy has written about the aims of the group further on.

2020 Wild Service Awards

Congratulations to seven members of our local group who have been given this award for outstanding voluntary service to the Trust over many years.

*Sue & Andy Duffield
Bernie & Mary McLean
Carl & Iris Sweeting
Wendy Wilkins*

Penorchard update

In our spring newsletter, produced before Coronavirus, mention was made of clearing a roadside fenceline to enable contractors to install a new stock-proof fence. This was the boundary of additional fields, owned by South Staffs Water and now leased by WWT. This land had been grazed in the past but has been neglected for a number of years, resulting in scrub invasion and the growth of large banks of bramble, some of which had been flailed just before lockdown.

During lockdown Trust reserves were closed and all work parties cancelled. However, Penorchard was monitored by some of our local volunteers who walked the rights of way as part of their regular exercise.

When travelling restrictions were eased, we still could not operate "normal" work parties but

debris from the earlier flailing needed to be removed to allow wildflowers and grass to regenerate. This was achieved by small household-based groups visiting on different days to rake it up (a huge task). The groups then moved on to some repairs to internal fences and cleared the access drive so that we can now park on site.

It was pleasing to note that a large variety of wildflowers had survived the neglect and large numbers of butterflies and other insects were observed. Flowers included: betony, agrimony, knapweed, tormentil, heath bedstraw and bird's-foot trefoil while butterflies included marbled white, small heath, meadow brown and common blue.

"New Normal" work parties resumed in August with small socially distanced groups of volunteers allocated tasks in different parts of the reserve. Tasks included more internal fence repairs, clearing one of the rights of way and removal of debris from a burnt-out barn and its associated rubbish. This work continued in September and October and contractors have now installed the new roadside fence and new access gates.

In spite of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic much has been achieved though there is still a great deal left to do. Many thanks are due to all who have contributed their time and effort.

Ian Williams

Volunteer days at Penorchard Meadows

Work parties are held on Mondays 10am-3pm on:

December 7th
January 4th
February 1st
March 1st
April 12th



Pearl-bordered fritillary at Penorchard Meadows
Photo: Pam Holmes

Current volunteers will get an email giving details of our meeting place for each work party, new volunteers should contact Andy Harris on andyh@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org

Bring lunch and a drink for mid-morning and for lunchtime if you are staying all day.

Scarlet Tiger Project

If you took a walk along Roman Road/Sandy Lane during June/July, you may have been lucky enough to see the beautiful, day-flying scarlet tiger moth. The discovery of their colourful caterpillars, feeding on alkanet growing alongside Roman



Scarlet tiger Photo © Joy Stevens

Road in 2013, sparked a local conservation project along the bridle path to protect the moth and to enhance biodiversity. This was aimed particularly at improving

conditions for the range of butterflies present but also to benefit all wildlife. The project was set up by volunteers from Butterfly Conservation in conjunction with Dudley Council, who readily agreed to alter their road verge maintenance regime in order to suit the scarlet tiger. We run monthly work parties in autumn/winter – 3rd Friday of the month - and welcome like-minded volunteers (subject to current Covid-19 restrictions). If you would like to join us please contact joystevens@blueyonder.co.uk and/or find out more via Facebook at www.facebook.com/scarlettigerproject

Joy Stevens

The Times They Are A-Changin'

I love how green our country is and this is largely due to its temperate climate, shifting seasons and changing weather. When I was growing up there seemed to be a sense of security and reassurance in the continuity of the seasons. As a child I knew by heart a poem 'The Months', by Sara Coleridge (1802-1852), which seemed to follow closely, the farming calendar.

The poem reflected what weather we would have at any given time. When it snowed in January it was only to be expected; February would bring a reprieve and, of course, there would be hot sun in July. There was a certain inevitability about it all.

Of course, there were unexpected weather events: The Big Snow 1947, The Great Smog 1952, The Big Freeze 1963, The Great Drought 1976: All of these were events to be remembered and talked about but they were exceptional occurrences.

How things have changed! We seem to lurch from one disastrous weather event to another: intense rainfall and flooding at unexpected times of the year, extreme heat leading to drought,

hurricane winds, such as the 'Beast from the East', and some children have barely experienced the wonders of snow. The poor farmers must not know whether they are coming or going. As for the poem, I don't think it would be possible to pen a modern version of 'The Months' faced with today's variations in weather.

Poem by Sara Coleridge

January brings the snow,
makes our feet and fingers glow.
February brings the rain,
Thaws the frozen lake again.
March brings breezes loud and shrill,
stirs the dancing daffodil.
April brings the primrose sweet,
Scatters daises at our feet.
May brings flocks of pretty lambs
Skipping by their fleecy dams.
June brings tulips, lilies, roses,
Fills the children's hands with posies.
Hot July brings cooling showers,
Apricots, and gillyflowers.
August brings the sheaves of corn,
Then the harvest home is borne.
Warm September brings the fruit;
Sportsmen then begin to shoot.
Fresh October brings the pheasant:
Then to gather nuts is pleasant.
Dull November brings the blast;
Then the leaves are whirling fast.
Chill December brings the sleet,
Blazing fire, and Christmas treat.

Wendy Wilkins

My doorstep wildlife

During these strange times I think I have spent even more time than usual in my garden and have seen several common species that I've not seen before, although they have probably been there all along.

One day in August this year there was a bright red and black insect I hadn't seen before and had no idea what it was. Of course, I had to try and identify it. I hope I have identified it correctly as *Corizus hyoscyami*.

There is a photo in "The Nature of Wyre" and the text states that it was mainly found on the coast but in recent years has spread inland and can be found in much of southern and central England.



Corizus hyoscyami

Avril Williams