

# Worcestershire WILDLIFE



**Worcestershire  
Wildlife Trust**

December 2021, Issue No. 152



# Welcome



Following the earlier government announcement that licenses to kill badgers will continue to be issued until 2026, Farmers Weekly has reported that badger culling is taking place this autumn in new areas in Worcestershire.

All of this follows a public consultation earlier in the year, where the public made it clear that they wanted an immediate end to the badger cull. A further 130,000 animals are now at risk of being shot in England which, in addition to the badgers already culled, represents 60% of England's badger population.

The culling will have repercussions on the health of natural habitats because badgers are vital to a thriving ecosystem. A quarter of the European badger population is found in the UK, we believe that the UK has an international responsibility to conserve them. Worcestershire Wildlife Trust opposes the badger cull and we will not allow culling to take place on our land.

We recognise the hardship that bovine TB causes in the farming community and the need to find the right mechanisms to control it. We want to see the Government prioritise badger vaccination.

The report confirms that the Government plans to phase out culling over the next five years and that the first stage of field trials of a cattle vaccine and diagnostic test to differentiate infected from vaccinated animals got under way at a cattle farm in Herefordshire in July. Despite this, we must keep up the pressure to see cattle vaccination accelerated and the culling stopped so please continue to lobby your local MP on this.

Find out more [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/badgers-matter](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/badgers-matter)

Colin Raven, Director

Pete Walkden



Andy Rouse, 2020/IS/CN

Nigel Bell



Stuart Brown

## Contents

Our wild Upton Warren	4
Local news	10
UK news	13
Worcestershire's nature reserves	14
Worcestershire's remarkable raptors	18
Ancient calls of the wild	20
UK: The restless world of saltmarshes	22
Wild winter reads	26
Hare today	27
Wild notebook	28
UK: Upcycle your garden for wildlife	30
Tracking Worcestershire's cuckoos	32
Photo competition	33
UK: A dose of nature	34
Your letters	35

### Worcestershire Wildlife Trust *Get in touch*

**Address:** Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Lower Smite Farm, Smite Hill, Hindlip, Worcs WR3 8SZ  
**Phone:** 01905 754919  
**Email:** [enquiries@worcestershireswildlifetrust.org](mailto:enquiries@worcestershireswildlifetrust.org)  
**Reg Charity No:** 256618  
**Company No:** 929644  
**Web:** [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk)  
**facebook.com/worcestershireswildlifetrust**  
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**flickr.com/groups/worcestershireswildlifetrust**

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**Chair:** David Mortiboys  
**Vice Chair:** Graham Martin  
**Treasurer:** John Blakiston  
**Secretary:** Richard Cory  
**Director:** Colin Raven  
**Head of Conservation:** Helen Woodman  
**Head of Resources:** Mike Perry  
*Discover the rest of the team on our website.*

**Your magazine team:** Wendy Carter, Harry Green, Mike Perry, Colin Raven, Rosemary Winnall, Helen Woodman, Sandra Young

**National content**  
 Editorial: Tom Hibbert  
 Design: Ben Cook

**Your membership team:** Julie & Anne  
[julie@worcestershireswildlifetrust.org](mailto:julie@worcestershireswildlifetrust.org)  
[anne@worcestershireswildlifetrust.org](mailto:anne@worcestershireswildlifetrust.org)

**Design and artwork:** Aspect Design, Malvern.  
 Tel: 01684 561567. [www.aspect-design.net](http://www.aspect-design.net)

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**Cover photo:** Pete Walkden



### Six ways to get involved with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

**Volunteer** Could you donate your skills and time to help wildlife? We have indoor and outdoor tasks that we need help with.  
[worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/volunteer](http://worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/volunteer)

**Donate** From purchasing land to protecting wildlife, exciting projects near you need your support.  
[worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/donate](http://worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/donate)

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[worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/local-groups](http://worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/local-groups)

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# Our wild Upton Warren

**Are you a regular visitor to our Upton Warren nature reserve? Members and volunteers have experienced the quiet enjoyment of birdwatching there for more than 50 years. For many of you, it is an important reason for joining the Trust and it is one of our best sites for recruiting new members to support our work for wildlife.**

Two discrete places, The Moors and The Flashes are a nice surprise if you take a wander away from the A38. In the 1950s and 60s just a few people, including Arthur Jacobs, one of our earliest wardens, and Bill Oddie, found a space to watch the seasons change.

If work needed doing in the early days, Arthur did it himself – erecting fences, digging ditches and recording birds, dragonflies and butterflies. Upton Warren has become famous for its rare birds, often short-stay migrants, and in earlier times it was usually Arthur who found them.

In 1968 Christopher Cadbury, one of the Trust's founders, made a successful bid to buy land and The Moors Pool nature reserve was established. The Flashes was bought three years later. In 1984 the reserve was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest for bird assemblages and, for The Flashes, the important inland saltmarsh.

Evolution has taken a steady trajectory. At The Moors, the first three hides were soon built and visitors were welcomed. Through natural processes, as the land gently slumps (look for a few of the old fence posts in the water), pools fringed with reeds have developed. Dedicated work by volunteers with spades, saws and brushcutters as well as by contractors with large machinery has created inlets, islands, small pools and a channel to attract bittern. Work continues with recent restoration of islands and an accessible hide.

Read on to discover the history and changes at The Flashes, a volunteer's perspective as well as what lies ahead.

Thanks to you

Upton Warren is one of more than 75 nature reserves that we care for.

The brine springs of Droitwich have been known and exploited for more than 2,000 years. The source is a long narrow underground northeast-southwest brine run that passes under the town, where it once ran close to the surface. There are also deeper runs and brine was pumped from these at Droitwich and the old Stoke Prior Salt Works towards Bromsgrove. The long-term deep extraction of brine led to surface subsidence and eventual collapse in some areas probably due to channels forming in the rock-salt beds by water running towards points of major extraction.

There are no pools shown at Upton Warren on maps made in the late 1800s. A possible drainage channel makes an appearance in the 1930s and aerial photos from 1945 possibly show slight depressions. Soon afterwards, following land subsidence, pools appeared at The Moors and then the Flashes, allowing brine to flow into the latter (the brine run curves easterly and bypasses The Moors).

## Salt-loving plants

In Victorian times a scatter of small briny marshes and pools were known in parts of Worcestershire, mainly to the south and southeast of Droitwich. Victorian botanists knew them from the plants that grew in their saline conditions. Most of these have vanished as surface features due to drainage and changes in agriculture.

Worcestershire naturalist Fred Fincher reviewed Worcestershire's saltmarsh plants in 1950 noting that 40 species had been recorded: the first record was of common saltmarsh grass *Glyceria maritima* in 1796. The Droitwich district was the main source of records. There is no mention of Upton Warren in his article but, as we have seen, within the next 20 years, what we now call the The Moors and The Flashes had become nature reserves.

## Supporting the birds

Besides birds and plants, records of other species have gradually accumulated. These include butterflies, moths, dragonflies and other larger insects. There have been few studies so far of aquatic invertebrates. Finding out more about these is important as they, and especially their larvae, provide food for passage and breeding waders. For example, we don't know exactly what the avocets are eating and it is difficult to find out. It is the small aquatic invertebrates, those near the base of the food chain, that eventually enable avocets to nest at Upton Warren.

Surveys have revealed water beetles and true bugs, including a water boatman that lives in saline water. For several months in 2012 insects were surveyed in one very small area. To identify the vast quantity of insects that were caught demands many hours using a microscope and complex identification keys. Most are very small flies and many have larvae that live in



Bob Tunstall



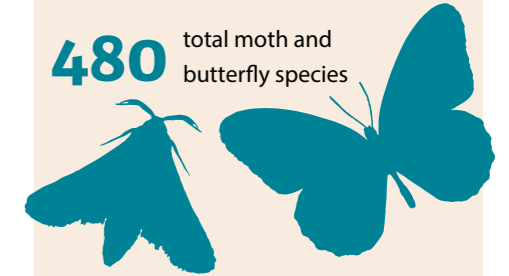
Bill Oddie on a more recent visit to Upton Warren



**c.£330,000**

spent on improving habitat in 2011–2021

**480** total moth and butterfly species



**245** total bird species

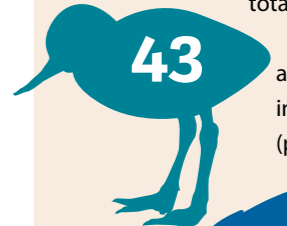


**191** total fly species



**c.1087** total species (so far)

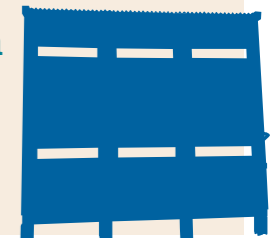
**43** avocet chicks in 2019 (peak year)



**37** jack snipe in 2017 at Amy's Marsh



**765m** of fox fencing



**7** hides across the reserve

salty water and mud. Volunteer Mick Blythe has so far identified 190 species and there are many more. Amongst them are 22 species usually found at the coast, often on saltmarshes, and many of them have not been recorded inland previously. There are even two species new to Britain.

Volunteer effort to record and collate records of all wildlife across the site is phenomenal, providing a live 'state of the reserve' and enabling us, with volunteers on our reserve management group, to review short- and long-term trends of species and measure the impact of our management.

## Managing the habitat

Working alongside, and with, the natural processes has been habitat management and creation work. Due to the composition and dynamic nature of Upton Warren, new plans and ideas continue to be part of its story.

Throughout the 1980s and 90s volunteer and contractor effort created new islands with stone shingle cover to attract wading bird species on both sites and in 1993 Amy's Marsh was created, transforming habitat at The Moors.

From the 1970s at The Flashes, the Hen Pool was excavated several times, channels were opened in the reedbeds, a new pool was created on land east of the first flash, existing islands repaired and new islands created, the sluice was replaced and annual reed management took place. Fox-proof fencing was installed around the perimeter in the 90s and replaced in 2018, boardwalks were installed and new hides built. Alongside this, we established the mobile management tool of grazing animals.

We are constantly learning from studies of hydrology, geology, salinity, effects of water level changes on birds and the saltmarsh plants, plant survey and mapping changes, reedbed management, bats and bird habitat requirements to inform decisions.



Kingfisher pool restoration

Eleanor Reast



Improving island habitat at The Flashes

Andy Harris



## My perspective

**Volunteer Warden, John Belsey**

I first visited Upton Warren in 1977 and from that day to this my passion for it has never waned.

During years birding around the UK I gained a wealth of knowledge about wetlands and waders. After being given the privilege to manage Upton Warren, I set about implementing that knowledge into practice. Along with hundreds of volunteers and a loyal band of stalwarts we can rightly feel proud of what we have achieved – transforming this small wet patch in the middle of the country into a thriving wetland.

Seeing unusual birds on your 'local patch' is always a thrill and in 44 years I have amassed 221 species. But for me the ultimate high is when we entice a new breeding species, culminating in 2003 when unexpectedly a pair of avocet bred at The Flashes.

Suffice to say that once you get hooked on Upton Warren, you never let go. It brings so much pleasure to me and many others.

Over time, we have been able to move from a period when we had no choice other than volunteers toiling for hours moving stone to the islands one wheelbarrow at a time to using contractors with amphibious craft and large diggers. Volunteer effort is still vital to the success of Upton Warren; our volunteers are the eyes on the ground making note of changes, talking to visitors, part of the reserve management group, ideas creators and, of course, they still spend hours managing the habitats.

## Challenges

As with all wetlands, natural succession creates a constant state of flux. Several concerning challenges face us:

- Avian botulism. These outbreaks in wild waterbirds are not uncommon and can occur anywhere and in any month. However, they are more frequent in warm summers and have occurred at The Flashes in 2020 and 2021. It is important to try and break the cycle by collecting and removing the carcasses.

- Changes in water quality in the River Salwarpe and Hen Brook. There have been sewage and pollution incidents from nearby industrial estates.
- Changes in water availability. Hotter, drier summers and more flashy rainfalls cause sudden dramatic changes to the water levels in the pools, torrential rainstorms in the breeding season have washed away nests and chicks.
- Habitat management – time and money. It's not cheap caring for a dynamic reserve. Even with land slumping, silt is building up in the pools and, at some stage, excavation at The Flashes may be required.
- Islands need clearing of weeds that prevent birds nesting and they need refurbishing.
- What if we can no longer find a grazier? We might quickly lose the open grassy areas favoured by some feeding birds.
- Which is the next hide to be replaced?
- Will we have enough volunteers to




Volunteers creating a feeding channel for avocets at The Flashes

Wendy Carter

continue the practical work and wildlife surveying?

- Money and time. A rough estimate of the cost to manage the reserve over 50 years is at least £1.5 million, with nearly half of that money raised in grants and volunteer time equating to at least £350,000. It is quite an endeavour for us all as well as a pleasure.

Whatever the challenges, it is an incredible place and a wonderful series of different but connected habitats for wildlife.

 Read more about saltmarshes on pages 22–25.

For more information visit

[www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/nature-reserves/upton-warren](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/nature-reserves/upton-warren)



**Helen Woodman, WWT**  
Head of Conservation. Helen enjoys seasonal changes – the smells, sounds and beauty of our wild places.

# Local news



Paul Lane

## Wilder Worcestershire project launched!

The Trust has launched an exciting new project in recent months thanks to funding from the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund.

The new project, Wilder Worcestershire – Nature's Recovery for All, will work with the community and partners within six areas of Worcester to engage and inspire residents to get involved in helping nature to recover. The six areas have been chosen to help develop ways to improve nature's recovery that are more equal, diverse and inclusive.

In addition, the Trust will undertake activities outside of the city to develop wilder towns and villages, build partnerships across the county and work on some of the Trust's 75+ nature reserves. The project will involve working with local community organisations, schools, housing associations, faith organisations and residents to help connect people to nature and help nature to recover.

The project launches our new #TeamWilder. Find out more and discover how you can be a part of it [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/team-wilder](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/team-wilder)

### Green Recovery Challenge Fund



Wendy Carter



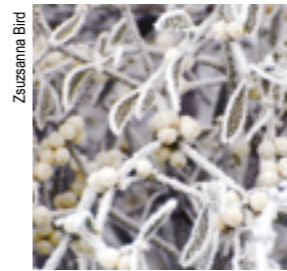
Harry Green

## In Memory

John Lashley, who passed away in May, made major contributions to the Trust. He was a founder volunteer at Lower Smite Farm and subsequently applied his business acumen as a trustee for several years. Before retirement John was instrumental in establishing a long-term relationship with Severn Waste Services who have since contributed many hundreds of thousands of pounds towards our work.

In July we were sad to learn of the passing of one of our oldest friends, Arthur Cundall, just before his 92nd birthday. Arthur worked hard at Tunnel Hill nature reserve for over 50 years and was a brilliant photographer, providing many images to help our work in early newsletters and media.

Find more about John, Arthur and other friends we've lost on [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/in-memory](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/in-memory)

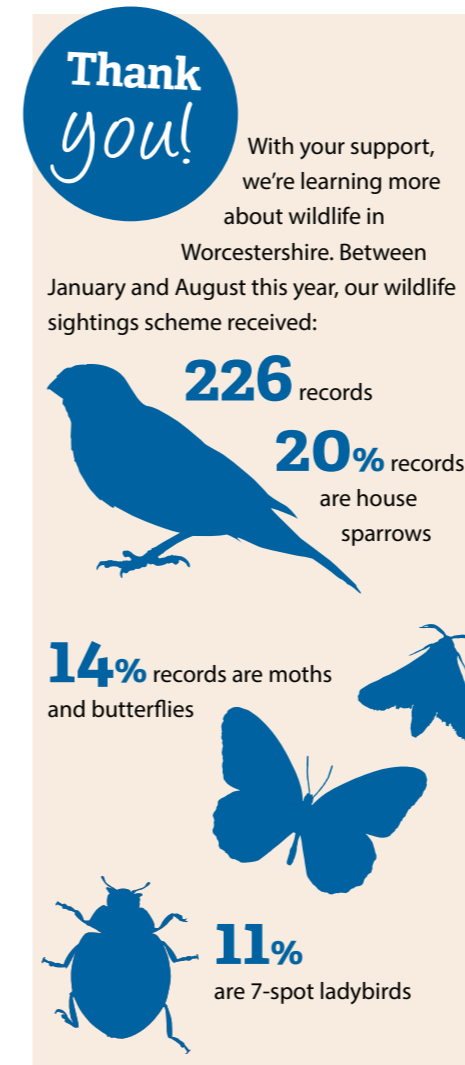


Zsuzsanna Bird

## We bet you didn't know

Mistletoe plants are either male or female but only the female produces the berries. Can you help us to map where it's found and in what trees?

[www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings)



Cathryn Dhonau

## Rare wildlife sightings

Thank you for getting behind our quest to record more wildlife. As well as letting us know where some of our common species are, several of you have been in touch with more scarce wildlife too. John Kirk, near Redditch, and Tim Wolff, near Malvern, were both treated to a special garden visitor in the form of purple emperor butterflies. Sue Braithwaite found a common clubtail dragonfly in Northwick and Lucy Mannion found a new site near Droitwich Spa for glow worms. The rarest wildlife that has been reported was found by Cathryn Dhonau when she spotted an ichneumon wasp in Worcester. According to the national database there are only ten sightings of *Agrothereutes abbreviatus* and Cathryn's was only the third in the last 100 years.

Let us know what you've seen [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings)

## Events

- Our **log sales** at Tiddesley Wood will be running 10 am–1 pm on the following dates: Sat 3rd & Sun 4th December, Sat 8th & Sun 9th January, Sat 5th & Sun 6th February, Sat 5th & Sun 6th March.
- Our Bromsgrove and NE Worcestershire, Malvern and Wyre Forest **Local Groups** have restarted their **indoor talks**. You can find out more on our website.
- Monthly **online talks** are still taking place and for our December talk we'll be joined by Brett Westwood, Johnny Birks and our own Helen Woodman for a chaired Q&A looking at rewilding. Places are limited so please visit our website to book: [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on)

## Christmas cards, calendars & gifts

There's still time to order your cards, calendars and gifts from our website [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/shop](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/shop) The last posting date for orders is Wednesday 15th December.

Trust Christmas cards also are available from Alfrick Community Shop, Clive's Fruit Farm, Droitwich Heritage Centre, the Fold in Bransford, Gwillams Farm Shop, the Hop Pocket, Nature's Intention Zero Waste Shop, the Pump House Environment Centre, Revill's Farm Shop and Upton Snodsbury Village Store.





Iain Turbin

## Conservation trainees

The first year of our conservation trainee scheme has now passed – we’ve said goodbye to a truly excellent team of trainees and welcomed two more. Of our first intake, Jake and Ruthie both successfully found jobs in wildlife conservation (with other Wildlife Trusts), which is one of the main aims of the scheme. Amy and Issy have returned to education, Amy for her undergraduate degree and Issy having finished her placement year with us.

Our two new trainees, Lydia and Meg, started this autumn and are getting stuck into life at the Trust. They’ll be joined by two more in spring as part of our rolling programme.

You can find out more about how all our trainees have been getting on by following their blog [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/blog/conservation-trainees](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/blog/conservation-trainees)

## 2021 raffle

Thank you to everyone who bought a raffle ticket this year – you bought £10,225 of tickets to support wildlife in Worcestershire. The winners are:

1st Ms Buckley, 2nd Ms Field, 3rd Mrs Lafferty, 4th Mrs Pitt, 5th Mr & Mrs Devine, 6th Mr & Mrs Sharp

## £2 million for wildlife

In August, Vine House Farm announced that they had raised £2,000,000 for wildlife conservation across the UK. The wildlife-friendly farm that grows bird seed gives 4% of each sale (and £10 for new customers) to local Wildlife Trusts. Over the last 14 years, more than £33,500 has helped wildlife in Worcestershire. Order direct from Vine House Farm to have bird food delivered to your door and give your birds a boost this winter [www.vinehousefarm.co.uk/](http://www.vinehousefarm.co.uk/)



Paul Lane

## Green Farm – appeal update

The Trust is fundraising for the acquisition of land at Green Farm, to the immediate west of our Monkwood Nature Reserve north of Worcester and we will be appealing to members for your support soon. This 60 acres of land would enable us to expand, connect and protect Monkwood. We plan

to re-wood parts of the site through a combination of natural regeneration and tree planting. We also plan to retain and improve some meadows immediately buffering Monkwood. Find out more on the Trust’s website, through social media and our e-newsletter.

# UK news

## We can’t COP-out on nature

**As we go to press, world leaders are gathering in Glasgow to discuss action to tackle the climate emergency. The 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties, known as COP26, will bring together more than 190 world leaders and tens of thousands of representatives to find solutions to the worsening crisis. Countries will set out their latest plans to reduce emissions and attempt to limit global warming to 1.5° Celsius, as well as adaptation plans for the changes that are now inevitable.**


There is a sense of urgency with the effects of current warming becoming increasingly evident, from record temperatures and widespread wildfires to an increase in episodes of very heavy rainfall and flooding. Changes to the climate are not just dangerous for people but are also threatening wildlife, including here in the UK. In the run-up to COP26, The Wildlife Trusts have been working hard to raise awareness of the connection between nature and climate and to encourage Government to take ambitious actions that focus on the restoration of nature as well as a reduction in emissions and improved resilience.

Nature must be at the heart of action on climate. Healthy natural landscapes can take in carbon and store it, whilst damaged habitats often release even more carbon into the atmosphere. Only by integrating climate action with nature’s recovery can we achieve a net zero (where the amount of greenhouse gases emitted balances with the amount taken out of the atmosphere), a climate resilient

UK where nature is thriving, by 2050. We need all of our national policies to be contributing to nature’s restoration, not degrading it further; this includes affording better protection to the wild places we already have.

Our 30 by 30 vision to restore at least 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030, is a minimum requirement for nature’s recovery and depends on commitment and funding from the UK’s governments. Nature can’t thrive in fractured pockets, we need to think bigger and link up our wild places.

However, it’s not just the UK governments that need to act. We can’t achieve nature’s recovery without wide support, which is why we are so passionate about empowering people to take action. To help teachers inspire students about the habitats that can help combat the climate emergency, for example, we recently launched a new climate education tool for Key Stage Two, Nature’s Climate Heroes. For those out of the school room, we’ve created advice pages about actions you can take in your own life.

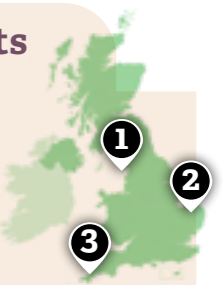
 Find out how you can help: [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/taking-climate-action](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/taking-climate-action)

Among other asks, The Wildlife Trust are calling on Government to:

- Reform the planning system so that it helps to address the nature emergency.
- Ensure that sustainable land use practices are adequately incentivised through the new Environmental Land Management schemes.

## UK highlights

**Discover how The Wildlife Trusts are helping wildlife across the UK**



### 1 Great news for gulls

Gull chicks have fledged at South Walney nature reserve for the first time since 2015, thanks to a new predator-proof fence. Since 2017, no chicks have survived longer than a week, but this summer Cumbria Wildlife Trust recorded over 100 large and healthy chicks of lesser black-backed gulls and herring gulls – a red-listed and declining species.

Find out more at [wtru.st/Cumbria-gulls](http://wtru.st/Cumbria-gulls)

### 2 Tadpole triumphs

The northern pool frog has been successfully reintroduced to Norfolk Wildlife Trust’s Thompson Common, the last place it was recorded before its extinction in Britain in the 1990s. Since 2015, more than 1,000 pool frog tadpoles have been released on the site, with early indications promising that the frogs will form a self-sustaining population.

Learn more at [wtru.st/frogs-return](http://wtru.st/frogs-return)



Ian Watkin & Cornwall Wildlife Trust

### 3 Jelly jeopardy

Cornwall Wildlife Trust supporter Ian Watkin spotted the unusual sight of a whiting trapped inside the bell of a compass jellyfish, whilst on a walk during National Marine Week. Juvenile fish often hide amongst jellyfish tentacles for protection from predators, but are occasionally stung and eaten.

# Worcestershire's nature reserves

Now that the autumn hay cuts and ecological monitoring work is done and dusted on the reserves, our officers and volunteers are busy with project work developing new sites like Dropping Well Farm, Green Farm and Romsley Manor Farm Meadows, mostly involving new fencing to allow grazing, key management for these heathland and grassland nature reserves. We've also got projects to refresh existing sites like Wilden Marsh, Ipsley Alders Marsh, Melrose Farm Meadows and Boynes Coppice. Add to this mix our annual forestry operations and acquiring some more small bits of land to buffer or protect existing reserves and its going to be another busy season.

## Restoration – new and old

Dropping Well Farm has seen its first proper year of crops, with wildflower and bird food mixes sown and designs for flower-rich margins and beetle-friendly banks built in. It was a very positive ecological change for the land and a carpet of poppies appeared as our work to prepare the soil disturbed the buried seed bank, bringing them to the surface, and stopping herbicide use allowed them to flourish. The next stage, this winter, is now to install fencing to allow aftermath grazing, a key step in ultimately restoring to heathland.

At Ipsley Alders Marsh we have pushed back the trees around the edges to allow light back on to the open marsh. Our restoration work at Wilden Marsh involves opening up silted-up ditches and allowing light back on to the banks to create better connectivity in the side ditches around the River Stour. This is to benefit the remnant water vole population recently discovered on the reserve, as well as improving feeding opportunities for wetland birds such as snipe. This is taking place thanks to funding from Severn Trent Water's Boost for Biodiversity Fund and includes monitoring over five years to assess the success of the work.



In September, we acquired a little over two hectares of grassland adjoining the southern boundary of Hollybed Farm Meadows. Separated from the main reserve by a stream, this is a steep wildflower-rich trio of meadows that expand and strengthen the existing reserve, which is very exciting. Hollybed is Worcestershire's Coronation Meadow and was another restoration project when we acquired it in 2013. Although meadow restoration can be a slow process, the reserve has responded well to ecological management and orchids have now spread from one field across nearly the whole site, with butterfly numbers climbing year-on-year and our replanted pear orchard thriving.



Annie Turchin

Ipsley Alders Marsh © Nigel Bell



## Of birds and flies

It has been a game of two parts at Upton Warren, with the reopening of the site after Covid and the impressive new Cuckoo hide, both very good news, and the volunteers deserve many thanks for their support and management work during this period. Unfortunately, over late summer we had an outbreak of botulism at The Flashes, a recurring toxin that has killed some birds. Staff and volunteers have worked hard to control this outbreak through removal of dead birds, a far from pleasant but necessary job. Despite this, there was reasonable breeding success for the avocets with 26 pairs raising 28 young and lapwing, oystercatcher and common tern fledging some young.

Lapwings at Hill Court Farm also managed to fledge a small number of chicks but the most unusual sighting was a female four-lined horsefly *Atylotus rusticus*. The nearest record of this attractive green-eyed insect is Otmoor in Oxfordshire – could this individual be a relict of the pre-drained Longdon Marsh? Whether it's clung on or appeared this year, it is not surprising as Hill Court Farm is an excellent site for horseflies, as our volunteers can confirm!

On the subject of birds, this summer Worcestershire Wildlife Trust sponsored the satellite tagging of a cuckoo by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). This was part of their project to examine the causes of the decline in this red-listed bird of conservation concern (the list of endangered species), focussing on their migratory routes and their dependence on weather systems in central and west Africa. Our sponsored bird is called Harry, named for Harry Green, whose long association and work with the Trust makes it a perfect name. You can read more about this project, almost from the cuckoo's bill, on page 32.

## Woodland news

Regular readers will know that we've worked with Butterfly Conservation to restore the once common wood white butterfly to Worcestershire's woods. The species has had another good year with a highest count from a single monitoring visit of 96 individuals at Grafton Wood over the summer. This is impressive for a butterfly that wasn't present in Grafton until its reintroduction in 2019.

Ash dieback sadly remains a big safety concern and, as autumn turned to winter, it was a major component in our forestry operations that usually take place to create structure and let light into our woodlands. Small-scale conservation forestry has happened at Grafton, Monk, Trench and Blackhouse woods this year, with a bigger scale operation to remove diseased ash along the southern edge of Tiddesley Wood along the busy road into Pershore. The woods may look quite different once the works are completed but, particularly at Tiddesley, the risk to fast-moving traffic makes it necessary work. Within our woods, away from public footpaths, we plan to leave significant areas of ash as standing deadwood and, hopefully, to allow for disease-resistant trees to be identified.

## Our team

We are now into the second year of our trainee scheme. This has gone well, with two of our four trainees going into their first paid conservation role and the other two returning to college as they study conservation-themed degrees. We've learned a lot from our first year, particularly never to launch a trainee scheme during a pandemic, and we are looking forward to welcoming and working with our next team of trainees now and over the next few months.

We were also very pleased to see the extension of funding for the Community Warden Officer. Run by our colleagues in the engagement team, this was developed as a response to the large amounts of new visitors to our sites over lockdown and it has been very helpful to have a more regular presence on our more popular reserves. With the new funding, the aim is to find better ways to communicate the joys of nature both to our visitors and to the communities around our reserves.



**Rob Allen**, WWT Reserves Team Leader. Rob cares passionately for wildlife and has spent his career trying to reverse ecological decline.

### DID YOU KNOW?

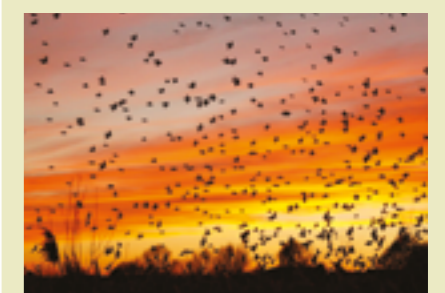
Chris the cuckoo, tracked as part of the BTO cuckoo project between 2011 and 2015 flew more than 50,000 migrating miles. Read more about the project and a new cuckoo called Harry on page 32.





## HIGH FIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Photos by: Peter Hawcroft, Lesley Betts, Gary Lawson, Harry Green, Paul Lane



1. Candlesnuff fungus on dead wood.
2. Redwing in berry-rich hedges.
3. Starling murmuration over reedbeds.
4. Winter tracks in mud or snow.
5. Chicken of the woods on oak trunks.

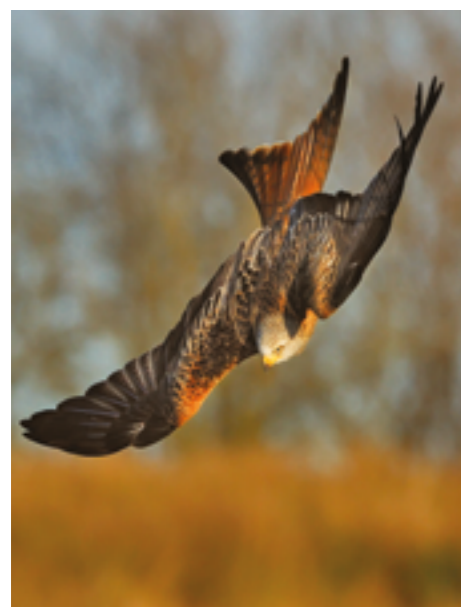


# Worcestershire's remarkable raptors

Birds of prey, or raptors for short, are some of the most spectacular and dramatic species found in the UK. From huge soaring eagles to tiny, fast-flying falcons, raptors are one of the most diverse family groups, with highly adaptable species suited to live in all habitats and using a wide range of hunting techniques. As apexes in the food chain, the family have suffered extensively in the past with increased usage of pesticides, habitat changes and illegal persecution all leading to dramatic population declines during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. With many major threats eliminated or reduced, many species have shown population recoveries and recolonisation of areas where they had been lost. The likelihood of encountering these show stopping birds in Worcestershire has never been better.



Andy Rouse, 2020VISION



Andy Rouse, 2020VISION

## Red Kite

Once on the edge of extinction in the UK, a tiny population survived in the wild valleys of central Wales. Following protection and reintroduction programmes, red kites have made a remarkable comeback and are now regularly seen throughout Worcestershire. With a staggering population increase of 1026% in the UK between 1995-2014, it is likely their sweeping flight and whistling calls will become an increasingly regular in the county.



Craig Reed

## Buzzard

The commonest raptor in Worcestershire, with its broad wings, large size and habit of sitting obviously on treetops, is the most likely to be encountered. Despite its size, buzzards are not adept hunters, preferring to forage for roadside carrion and earthworms in newly ploughed fields than hunting for their own prey. When hunting for earthworms, they can be incredibly social, with large, well-spaced gatherings in fields where feeding is good.



Simon Hislam

## Barn Owl

Suitably dressed in a ghostly white, the screeching screams and howls of a barn owl from an abandoned barn is believed to have been the source of many ghost and haunted building tales. Barn owls in the UK show a highly specialised diet, with rodents comprising 90% of the total, almost half of which (45%) is comprised of field voles. As a result, clutch size and breeding success vary greatly with cyclic booms or busts in rodent populations.



Wendy Carter

## Kestrel

While some other bird of prey species can be seen clumsily hovering, kestrels are true masters of this hunting technique, with fast flicking wingbeats and small corrections in tail posture keeping them glued to a single point in the sky. With a reduction in numbers of grassy meadows, the species has taken to hunting roadside verges, where they are a regular sight for many motorists.



Carl Day

## Peregrine

With swept back wings, a stooping peregrine is one of the most spectacular sights in the natural world. Reaching speeds of over 180mph, it is the fastest moving animal that has ever been known to live on earth. Such extreme speeds lead to some dramatic adaptations. Bone baffles in their nostrils slow air flow, making it easier to breathe at high speeds, and is believed by some to have been an inspiration for modern jet engine construction.



Craig Reed

## Tawny Owl

The commonest owl in Worcestershire, their familiar 'twit-whooo' and hooting calls are a regular sound in many woodlands. 'Tawnys' can be found in almost any woodland habitat, where their cryptic plumage helps them to blend into their daytime roost trees. Listen for the scalding calls of small birds, which often betray the presence of a day roosting owl.



Pete Walkden

## Sparrowhawk

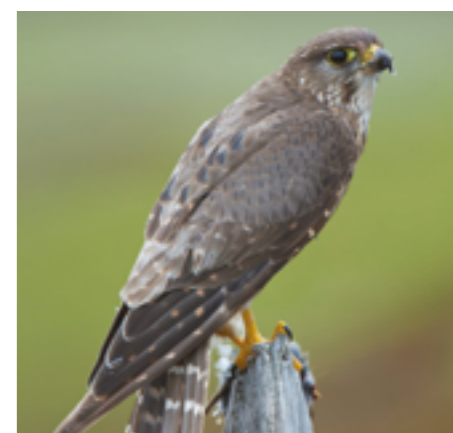
With its short, rounded wings, sparrowhawks are masters of agility, perfectly suited as a surprise ambush predator. As adept in dense woodland as they are in suburban gardens, they are the most likely raptor to be found in gardens, a rare opportunity to see our usually shy birds of prey up close. With a slate blue back, salmon pink barring on the breast and piercing orange eyes, a close sighting is always a delight.



Andy Morflew

## Hobby

Most of our birds of prey are altitudinal migrants, moving from the uplands to the lowlands to avoid harsh weather and follow food resources. Hobbies, however, are one of only two migratory raptors that breed in the UK. A true sub-Saharan migrant, a satellite tagged adult moved over 10,000 km from its nest in Germany to its wintering grounds in Angola and Zimbabwe.



Rob Jordan, 2020VISION

## Merlin

With males barely bigger than a blackbird, merlins are the smallest of the European raptors. Breeding on high moorlands in the north and west of the UK, their dashing flight is only seen on their winter visits to Worcestershire. A scarce visitor, they are best looked for near large finch and bunting flocks in arable farmland.



**Craig Reed**, Worcestershire Bird Recorder. A local birder, bird surveyor and volunteer warden at Upton Warren Wetland Reserve.

# Ancient calls of the wild

Words in place names that are related to Worcestershire's natural world:

Word	Language	Meaning
<i>beorg</i>	Old English	mound, tumulus or hill.
<i>cruc</i>	Celtic	barrow, cairn or hillock.
<i>ham</i>	Old English	settlement near a water meadow.
<i>holt</i>	Old English	woodlands, often of single species of trees.
<i>klint (clent)</i>	Old Scandinavian	cliff or rocky slope.
<i>knap</i>	Old English	top of steep sided hill.
<i>leah (ley)</i>	Old English	woodland clearing.
<i>pen</i>	Celtic	head of or hill.
<i>rhyd</i>	Celtic	ford.
<i>stoc</i>	Old English	a settlement dependent on a nearby larger one.
<i>tun</i>	Old English	farmstead, later village or town.

It seems extraordinary that place names coined thousands of years ago can still be relevant and useful to us today. They can describe the landscapes and wildlife of the past, sometimes in surprising detail, and provide clues for the rebuilding of ecosystems or even the reintroduction of species.

We are indebted to successive newcomers, including Romans and Anglo-Saxons, who listened and chronicled the sounds that indigenous people used to describe their world but didn't always understand the meaning of these 'foreign' tongues. An excellent example of how this process has produced some amusing tautologies is Bredon Hill. The first element is from a Celtic word 'bryn', meaning 'hill', in about 400 BC. Around 600 AD the early Anglo-Saxon pioneers borrowed the word and added 'dun', later corrupted to 'don', also meaning 'hill'. Later still, the Middle English word 'hill' was added. Thus, this landscape feature now calls out 'Hill, Hill, Hill' in three different languages!



Mike's book *The History of Place Names in England and Worcestershire: The Voices of the Past* is available from local independent bookshops, [www.youcaxton.co.uk](http://www.youcaxton.co.uk), Amazon, Kindle and eBooks.

## Landscape and geology

Many topographic features, including c.70% of river and stream names in England and many in Worcestershire, are of Celtic origin and known meaning. The Stour, 'the strong one', the Teme, 'the dark one', the Avon, a 'loan' word from Celtic meaning 'river' and Wyre meaning 'winding'. The Forest of Arden, meaning 'high', is cognate with the Ardennes on the Continent and reflects the widespread influence of the Celts on place names.

The common suffix, 'ley' is from Old English 'leah' meaning 'a woodland clearing', as in Ombersley and Astley. In Anglo-Saxon times about 30% of the country was wooded, compared to around 12% now, so whilst some of these have a natural origin, many reflect agricultural expansion.

Some names describe the geology and soil type of a locality as in the Roman and Anglo-Saxon names for Droitwich, Salinae and Saltwic, but also the River

Salwarpe from Old English meaning 'throwing up of salt'. Thrift or Frith, several locally, mean 'common' and often reflects an area of barren scrubland. Interestingly, one lies near Bentley, which translates, 'the woodland clearing of bent [a type of coarse grass]'. Malvern derives from Celtic 'moel fryn' or 'bare hill'. A common Old English equivalent is Callow Hill, also meaning 'bare'.

## Trees and flowers

Many names describe the flora of a locality such as Lindridge, Lindon and Linthurst, all referring to small-leaved lime from Old English 'lind'. However, early forms of Lincomb in Hartlebury point to the meaning of 'valley of the flax'. Ockeridge means 'oak ridge' and Boughton 'the settlement near the beech trees' from Old English 'ac' and 'boç' respectively.

Himbleton means 'village of the hop plant', Romsley 'the woodland clearing where the ramson [wild garlic] grow', Hill Furze refers to an area of gorse and Larford describes 'the ford with wild iris'. Pershore, although associated with fruit orchards, most likely derives from the Old English, 'persc' or 'persh' meaning 'osiers' or 'willow' and 'ora' meaning 'edge' or 'bank'.

## Wildlife

Many place names that superficially resemble wild animals such as Wolverley, Wolverton and Catshill actually derive from Anglo-Saxon personal names. Wolf references are found in Wolf Hill, near Alvechurch, and Anglo-Saxon charters – wolf-pits ('seathes') in Bredicote and Broadway and a wolf 'hagan' (haven) and a 'haia' in Longdon 'where wild animals are captured'.

Many Worcestershire place names reflect the former widespread distribution of beaver and include Barbourne, Bevere Island and Beaver's Ditch or 'beferic'; the latter is situated on land between Little Witley and the Severn and is mentioned in a 969 Anglo-Saxon charter.

It's not just wolves and beavers. Atterburn Brook, a tributary of the



Pete Walkden

Salwarpe, is documented in 1038 as 'Oter burne' or 'otters brook'. 'Broc', as in Broughton, is a little tricky as it means both 'stream' and 'badger' in Old English. Upper and Lower Arley take their prefix from the Old English 'earn' or 'eagle' and most likely here refer to the white-tailed species. Froxmere refers to Old English 'frox' or 'frogga', giving 'frog pool', first appearing in 1275.

An ancient, recurring and previously indecipherable name for Evesham is mentioned in charters of 709 'Chronochomme', 717 'Cronuchomme' and 860 'Cronuchamme'. The name likely originates from the Old English words, 'cranuc' or 'cronuc', meaning 'crane', translating as 'the settlement in the water meadow where the cranes live'. There are several hundred place names with the prefix 'cran' in England, reflecting the former widespread abundance of this magnificent bird.



Mike Jenkins

## Listening to the echoes of our ancestors

We should not ignore the echoes of our ancestors hidden in the origins and meanings of place names. They describe so well the natural history and environment of the past and remind us of both our use and abuse of nature. However, by providing clues to what our past landscape looked like and what species were present, they can guide us towards a more harmonious relationship with the world in which we live.



**Dr Mike Jenkins**, author and WWT Droitwich Local Group treasurer, is a retired GP and medical educationalist with general interests in natural history.

(Far left) White-tailed eagles may have been seen around Arley.

(Left) The name Bevere Island derives from Old English 'beofor' meaning 'beaver' and is one of only twenty such place names in England suggesting their decline in Anglo-Saxon times.

# The Restless World of SALTMARSHES

It is currently estimated there are some 48,250ha of saltmarsh in the United Kingdom — that's just under 70,000 football pitches!

The Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould's melodrama, *Mehalah: a Story of the Salt Marshes*, is a cautionary tale of estuarine life where the heroine's fate is bound up in a maze of creeks and back channels. The novel celebrates the marshes, 'A more desolate region can scarce be conceived, and yet it is not without beauty'. My childhood memories are those of Mahalah's marshes, which surround Mersea Island, off the Essex coast. The reek of silty ooze never really leaves you, nor do the reflections on engulfing tides or the astonishing concentration of life in so superficially barren a place.

Saltmarsh habitats can be found wherever plants are soaked in brine. As an island nation we tend to think of saltmarshes as coastal habitats but that is not always the case – Worcestershire Wildlife Trust care for a saltmarsh near landlocked Droitwich Spa, where avocet chicks feed amongst the saline turf and pools. For all lovers of wildflowers, wherever you live, there will be a kerb-side near to you where a suite of salty species has followed the spread of council gritters.

## Shaped by cattle

Like most of our country's habitats, the ecosystems of saltmarshes co-evolved with large wild mammals. Aurochs, the native wild cattle of Europe, were last known on our saltmarshes some three and a half thousand years ago, by which time domesticated cows were well established as their successors. The most diverse saltmarshes for birds, plants and invertebrates are those with a high structural diversity, which is created by extensive cattle grazing. To the eye, high structural diversity means a patchy landscape of flowery creek sides with lawns of shorter turf; it's a tough world to live in, where few things thrive but many survive. Such tensions are integral to biologically diverse places.

Before the advent of industrial farming our saltmarshes were some of the most important pastures in the rural economy. Not only do tidal marshes get a twice-daily dose of silty fertility but their saltiness also suppresses the disorders of livestock that abound in freshwater wetlands. For at least two thousand years, our ancestors tried to tame this wild abundance by building seawalls, so creating the vast brackish grazing marshes of our southern estuaries. The Gwent and Somerset Levels of the Severn estuary retain some of our richest marshes, including those cared for by Gwent Wildlife Trust that have recently been reprieved from a realignment of the M4 motorway. Unfortunately, the natural wealth of our saltmarshes is overlooked by some people who mistakenly regarded them as worthless places that are just waiting to be built on.

The very best marshes are where there is a gradient from hyper-saline brine pools, crystallising under the summer sun, to channels with full strength seawater that grade upstream to a point where the smallest pinch of salt is barely detectable. These complete transitions can be found around sea lochs and sheltered bays in the northwest but they are exceptionally rare in the south where those coastal landscapes have become fragmented.



Grazing cattle create diverse marshes

Clive Chatters



Saltmarshes are being lost at a rate of c.100ha a year, mostly to sea level rise

Clive Chatters

One such site can be found upstream of Southampton Docks where Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust manage the Lower Test marshes. Surveys of the saltier parts of these marshes show their restless character, moving around the floodplain and migrating upstream as sea levels rise in response to climate change.

## An ever-changing landscape

Long experience shows us that manipulating saltmarshes comes at a cost. Saltmarshes are naturally dynamic; over generations they shift across the landscape with the ebb and flow of the tide. As conservationists we have no status quo to conserve, we have to embrace change because we cannot stop it. Attempts to fix a saltmarsh to the

spot, as a nature reserve, or somewhere that's been built on, create long-term liabilities, not only to maintain the sea walls but also to cope with the enhanced flood risk that this brings. We can delay responding to these natural processes but each deferral means that when change comes, it is all the greater.

Essex Wildlife Trust has led the way in realigning seawalls so that there are new marshes that meet the needs of today. We now have confidence that the wildlife of saltmarshes is eminently capable of moving into fresh sediments when the opportunity is offered. At the same time, the revived marsh becomes a nursery ground for the local fishery, a buffer against storm surges and the thick organic sediments sequester carbon at a rate that exceeds most tree plantings. Once rejuvenated, healthy saltmarshes offer us a way to address the crisis of climate change.

## Wildlife havens

Saltmarshes, and particularly the abundant birdlife they support, inspired the establishment of the nature conservation movement in Britain. It was the opportunity to acquire the marshes at Cley on the north Norfolk coast that led to the foundation of the first Wildlife Trust in 1926. The guaranteed seasonal spectacle of migrating birds has enthused our movement to protect some of our largest nature reserves, from the sheltered Montrose Basin in Angus to the Rockcliffe marshes where Cumbria's Solway coast meets the borderlands of Scotland.

Flocks from all over the northern hemisphere head to winter on our sediment shores, brent geese from Siberia, oystercatchers from Norway, knot from the Arctic and teal from

the Baltic. The great journeys taken by estuarine birds are worthwhile because here on the wet western limits of Europe they find a winter refuge, free from the deep freeze of their breeding grounds.

Wildlife Trusts have a particular role to play in safeguarding the diversity and wonder of saltmarshes. For generations, local people have treasured what makes their patch special – be that the super-diversity of beetles in a brackish creek or a picotee strand of thrift along the tideline. Collectively the Wildlife Trusts have taken responsibility for an astonishing assortment of habitats that we lump into the clumsy category of saltmarsh. Our nature reserves help us to appreciate the importance of local distinctiveness in this superficially desolate but unquestionably beautiful landscape.

There are 44 different plant communities recognised from British saltmarshes

Clive Chatters



Catherine Chatters

**Clive Chatters** has worked for Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust since the 1980s. He has written a celebration of Britain's saltmarshes:

*Saltmarsh – British Wildlife*

*Collection No. 5*, published in 2017 by Bloomsbury.



Fergus Gill, 2020/VISION



Saltmarsh is one of our 'super hero' habitats when it comes to helping combat climate change. Find out more about this habitat and others that need protecting and restoring to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to change: [wildlifetrusts.org/emergency](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/emergency)

# Wild winter reads

As the nights draw in and temperatures drop, what could be cosier than curling up on the sofa and getting lost within the pages of a nature book? Whether you prefer a good story, lyrical writing or non-fiction, there are many wonderful books waiting to transport you to wild places and on wild adventures.

If you are wondering where to start, why not check out our nature reads webpage where staff and trustees recommend some of their favourites. More great reads will continue to be added so pop back regularly and you're sure to find something to inspire you. Here are a few of the suggestions, starting with a couple of shorter reads:



**Guests of Summer – a House Martin Love Story** by Theunis Piersma. A unique little gem of a book in which the author, a Dutch ornithologist, describes watching the house martins nesting on his house in the summer sunshine. This is readable science that reveals many secrets, with some fascinating chapter headings!



**The Offing** by Benjamin Myers is a short novel set just after World War Two about a boy's journey on foot and his awakening to the joy of poetry and the natural world.



For a longer read, how about **Miss Benson's Beetle** by Rachel Joyce, an uplifting novel about the search for an elusive golden beetle and a mismatched pair of travelling companions.



**The Running Hare** by John Lewis-Stempel is set in rural Herefordshire. The writing is witty, evocative and compelling, going straight to the heart of what it means to be part of nature.



You will also find recommendations for help with identification, such as **Insects of Britain and Ireland** by Paul Brock, the best general guide there is to introduce you to the wonderful world of entomology.



Read Steve's review of **A Field Guide to Britain's Hoverflies** by Ball and Morris to get an inkling of how fascinating these little creatures are!



If you like books you can dip in and out of you could try a variety of almanacs as handbooks to the changing seasons or **Mindfulness and the Natural World** by Claire

Thompson, which is divided into sections with meditations you can follow.



I'm excited to read **A Natural History of Dragons**, a series of six books by Marie Brennan. I'd not heard of them before so am hugely grateful for Wendy's quirky recommendation!



[www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/nature-reads](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/nature-reads)



**Sandra Young**, WWT trustee. Often with her nose in a book, Sandra is interested in nature, culture and folklore.

# Hare today

Words: **Jennifer Loyd-Pain**  
Photo: **Andrew Parkinson, 2020VISION**

**Winter is a great time to catch a glimpse of this elusive mammal. Brown hares were introduced to Britain about 2000 years ago. They are larger than rabbits with more russet colouring, long ears with black tips, very powerful back legs and a short tail with a wide black stripe on the upper side.**

They prefer old meadows but are often found on arable land and even use hedgerows and woodlands.

Primarily nocturnal in their feeding habits, you might spot them around dusk and dawn. Wild grasses make up 90% of the winter diet.

Adults can run up to 75 km per hour (45 mph) and can make abrupt turns without slowing down. While running the tail is tucked down so that the white underside cannot be seen. However, the speediest mammal in Britain also avoids predators by lying down flat and staying still.

They do not dig but rest in depressions, called forms, up to 10cm deep among long grass. A resting hare can look like a mound of earth!

Droppings of dry plant material are round, fibrous and are generally scattered or in small groups.

Hare tracks will show long hind feet in parallel and, depending on how fast it was travelling, you may also see the oval impressions of the fore feet between the hind feet.

A female, or jill, can have up to four litters a year. Young are called leverets and are weaned after three to four weeks.

True conservationists, they eat their own droppings to gain more nutrients the second time material passes through the gut.

The expression 'mad as a march hare' originated as a result of courtship behaviour. Famous for 'boxing' during the February-July breeding season, this is actually the jill repelling the attentions of males with their front legs while standing upright.



Brown hares are widespread but numbers are falling. All sightings are welcome. Find out more from the Worcestershire Mammal Group at [www.worcestershiremammals.org/surveys/hare/](http://www.worcestershiremammals.org/surveys/hare/)



# Wild notebook



All photographs by Rosemary Winnall

**★ STAR SPECIES**



**Herald Moth *Scoliopteryx libatrix***

We splash our way up the small stream to the tunnel under the railway line where, torches in hand, we plunge into the darkness. We're searching for cave spiders but not far from the entrance we see a flash of colour on the left wall and come face to face with a hibernating herald moth. I've seen them after dark in the summer feeding on garden ivy flowers but this adult will remain throughout the winter, like others in sheds, caves and hollow trees, until it wakes and flies again in March.

**Lesser Celandine *Ranunculus ficaria***

Who will spot the first celandine of the year I wonder on our family winter walk along the lanes? These harbingers of spring (and there are four subspecies) only open fully on warm days, their glossy petals gleaming in the sunshine. William Wordsworth wrote three poems about this, his favourite flower.



**Gorse Shieldbug *Piezodorus lituratus***

It's unusually warm winter weather and as I move round to the sunny side of the bush I see several shieldbugs and ladybirds sunbathing, warmed prematurely during their winter hibernation. They will retreat as soon as the day cools but I know they are there, waiting for spring to arrive.



**Common Dog Lichen *Peltigera membranacea***

I step gingerly over the log and admire this strange lichen that changes colour when wet and has a secret life within. How can a fungus and an alga or cyanobacteria live together and how do they get together in the first place? It's one of nature's many mysteries.



**Badger track**

My eyes scan the way ahead along the riverside path looking for patches of mud that act as storyboards informing us of recent visitors. This badger has passed through during the night, probably walking and not running as the hind-feet have registered in the track of the fore-feet.

**Garden Snails *Cornu aspersum***

Moving a slab leaning against the wall I spot a cluster of overwintering snails. Each has sealed itself up for the winter with its epiphragm of solidified mucous. They can change chemicals in their blood to stop body fluids freezing and ice forming in tissues, surviving temperatures as low as 50° C.



**Sunset**

Why are sunsets red? The sun's white light is seven different colours, each with a specific wavelength. When the sun is low in the sky its light passes through more atmosphere. The short wavelength blues and violets scatter off the air particles, leaving the long wavelength reds and oranges to reach our eyes.



**Dead Man's Fingers *Xylaria polymorpha***

I see fingers beckoning as I near the fallen beech trunk. These strange fungi have already matured and ejected their spores but their woody structures will remain all winter. This is a saprobic fungus feeding on polysaccharides in deadwood, helping with its decomposition and the recycling of nutrients.



**Rosemary Winnall**

WWT member. Rosemary is interested in all aspects of wildlife, especially when linked to the Wyre Forest!

# Upcycle your garden for wildlife

Katy Frost

## Pallet herb garden

An upturned pallet can add height to your garden. You can paint it a nice colour and simply wedge plants in their pots between the slats.



## Use hessian bags to grow bee-friendly plants

Many bee-friendly plants grow well in pots and hessian bags make excellent alternatives that you can pack away in winter. Choose drought-tolerant catmint, lavender and Mediterranean herbs like oregano and mint.



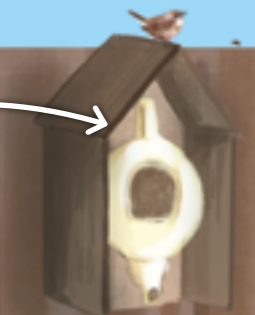
## Tin can bee hotels

Fix an old tin can to a fence or wall and pack it with dried, hollow plant stems from 1mm to 12mm in diameter, to attract a range of solitary bees and wasps. Make sure the can overhangs the stems so they don't get wet.



## A teapot bird house

An old teapot can make the perfect nest site for a robin or wren. Hang it with the spout facing down, in a sheltered site away from cats and other predators.



## Grow plants in saucepans

Drill holes in old saucepans and other kitchen containers to make plant pots. They're perfect for salad crops like lettuce and radish, plus herbs like chives and parsley.



## Plant-tray bird bath

Fill an old plant pot tray with water to make a bird bath. Stand it on old bricks to raise it from the ground or leave it low to provide water for hedgehogs. Add a stone to help bees escape if they get stuck.



## Old sink pond

A Belfast sink or old baby bath make attractive mini container ponds, or sink a full-sized bath into the ground for a bigger pond. Pile up logs or stones to make sure wildlife can get in and out safely.



**Wildlife gardening needn't be expensive. There's nothing more rewarding than upcycling old, broken or unused household items into wildlife habitats for the garden.**

Upcycling is a fantastic way to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill, while saving you money too. Who needs to buy expensive plant pots when there are old saucepans, wellington boots or even basins and toilets that can be used instead? Or how about making a pond from your old bath or kitchen sink?

There are no limits to what you can do with old, broken and unused items. Use your imagination to find creative ways to find new uses for forgotten possessions in the loft or shed. What can you use to make a cosy bird box for

a blue tit or a refugia for slow-worms? Do you have enough old bits of wood to knock up a hedgehog or bat box?

Whatever you choose, make sure you use materials safely and effectively. Upcycled gardens look fun, quirky and unique. They can make fantastic wildlife habitats too.

Get more wildlife gardening tips on our website [wildlifetrusts.org/actions](http://wildlifetrusts.org/actions)



**Kate Bradbury** is passionate about wildlife-friendly gardening and the author of *Wildlife Gardening for Everyone and Everything* in association with The Wildlife Trusts.

Sarah Cullie



# Tracking Worcestershire's cuckoos

Worcestershire and cuckoos are forever linked since the studies of Edgar Chance at Pound Green Common (now one of our nature reserves) revealed the complexities of their life. As part of a British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) project in the 1960s, I spent many hours looking for rare marsh warblers along the River Avon near Pershore and cuckoos were constant companions.

Ten years ago the BTO started a satellite tracking programme following male cuckoos to and from their wintering areas in Africa. I was hooked and avidly followed their journeys online. Whichever route they took through Europe, all had to cross the inhospitable Sahara then south to the tropical forests of central Africa; I was amazed by their varied journeys. All the birds are named and one, Chris, made the journey back and forth five times.

Imagine, then, my excitement when in 2021 the scheme came to Worcestershire with sponsorship from the Trust, Severn Trent Water and individuals. Several birds were caught and fitted with tracking tags. Stuart Brown, a leading light involved in catching the Worcestershire cuckoos, named the two caught near Ripple Clive and Harry. A third, caught at the Wildgoose nature reserve near Grimley, was named Calypso by Severn Trent staff.

Why Clive and Harry? We were old friends closely associated through international studies of wading birds and Stuart says we both strongly influenced his lifetime studies of birds. Clive sadly died last year.

When I started to write this in early September Harry and Clive were in central Mauritania. Harry's tag had been quiet for days and Clive had moved only a short distance and gone quiet. Teeth clenching moments, were they still alive? Then the news came. Harry and Clive had died in the desert. Migration to Africa is tough and data from tracked cuckoos is providing valuable information to help us understand more about the hazards our birds face. At the time of writing Calypso was still going strong in the Kwiabana Game Reserve in the south of Zamfara state, Nigeria.

Over the years I have been given several awards related to wildlife conservation and I treasure them all. Now I thought that my other self was to be a cuckoo, migrating to Africa to visit a rainforest and next year to return to Worcestershire's countryside to eat hairy caterpillars and chase bubbling female cuckoos. It wasn't to be! What an amazing honour to have had my name attached to a cuckoo for research to help understand the hazards of migration. It's the best! Thank you.

Follow Calypso's journey:  
[www.bto.org/cuckoos](http://www.bto.org/cuckoos)



**Harry Green**, WWT trustee is a life-long naturalist and ornithologist.



# Photo competition



## Our annual photo competition is open for entries!

Think you've captured the beauty of Worcestershire's wildlife or wild places? Have you got an unusual or fun angle, will your photos inspire a love of our natural world?

Whether on a nature reserve, in our towns and countryside or in your own garden, wherever you watch wildlife, keep a camera close to hand to capture the action.

## Judges

All our team get involved and we're delighted to be joined again by Pete Walkden [www.petewalkden.co.uk](http://www.petewalkden.co.uk) and Jason Curtis [www.wyrewildlife.co.uk](http://www.wyrewildlife.co.uk) to help with the difficult final decisions.

Twelve lucky photographers will win an A4 space in our 2023 calendar and a copy each of the calendar. Runner's-up images also feature in the calendar and, of course, all entries help us to promote Worcestershire's fantastic wildlife.

## Fieldcraft

**Do no harm** – the welfare of the wildlife and the wild place comes first.

**Don't get too close** – let birds feed their young and move on if they're agitated.

**Watch your feet** – stay on paths, don't trample flowers to reach more flowers.

**Know the law** – familiarise yourself with protected species and the laws that protect them.

**Know the lure** – don't use recordings to attract birds, they can disrupt behaviour and risk the lives of chicks.

## How to enter

Complete the entry form (download [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/photography-competition](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/photography-competition)) and send with your CD of images to:

Photography Competition  
Worcestershire Wildlife Trust  
Lower Smite Farm, Smite Hill, Hindlip  
Worcestershire, WR3 8SZ

Or send via wetransfer.com to [editor@worcestershireswildlifetrust.org](mailto:editor@worcestershireswildlifetrust.org)  
Closing date: Monday 4th April 2022.  
(Winners announced in July through social media, local press and our summer magazine.)

Name .....

Address .....

Tel .....

Email .....

Twitter account (if you have one) .....

Would you like to receive our e-newsletter, sent every month? (You can unsubscribe at any time) Yes  No

### Brief description of photograph(s) including location

1 .....

2 .....

3 .....

4 .....

5 .....

6 .....

I give my permission for the images submitted for entry to be used free of charge by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust in its literature and publicity, on greeting cards, its website and in the calendar.

Signed .....

Date .....

### TERMS & CONDITIONS

- Images must be accompanied by an entry form where the entrant signs to agree to their use by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust as described.
- Images must be submitted in digital format, labelled with title of the photo and your name
- Images should be landscape, 300dpi and at least 1MB – big enough to print, at good quality, at A4 (12" x 8" / 3600x2400 pixels). Images not submitted at this size will not be considered.
- Images submitted should not have won another photographic competition.
- Images must have been taken in Worcestershire and locations noted.
- A maximum of six images per person can be entered into the competition.
- Judges look for 'natural' photos so please avoid too much post-processing and the use of post-camera effects. Please remove watermarks.
- Worcestershire Wildlife Trust may ask for further information about the photographic methods and the welfare of the subject.

# A dose of nature

Dr Amir Khan



Tom Houghton

I have just come in from the garden, having filled the bird feeders with sunflower hearts, topped up the watering station with fresh water and refilled the bowls the hedgehogs like to eat from with crunchy kitten biscuits. As soon as I come inside, a magnificent male bullfinch plonks itself onto one of the feeders and starts eating the seeds, dropping as many onto the floor as it manages to get into its mouth. Luckily an opportunistic chaffinch is on clean up duty, guzzling any seeds the messy bullfinch drops. It is a lovely scene to watch unfold, calming and beautiful in its simplicity.

Many of you reading this article will be familiar with the feeling of positivity that fills our bodies when we spend time in nature, and as a doctor it is something I am increasingly 'prescribing' for my patients. I have to be honest, sometimes I do get incredulous looks when I suggest a 'dose' of time spent in green spaces to my patients to help soothe their ailments, either on its own or in conjunction with modern medicine; but for those who heed my advice, I have never had any complaints.

That is because there is scientific evidence that nature is good for us. When we go outdoors and embrace our natural surroundings our bodies produce less of our stress hormone, cortisol, lowering our heart rates and blood pressure. We also produce more of our 'happy' brain chemicals, dopamine and serotonin, increasing our sense of calm and wellbeing.

It is relatively easy to spend time outdoors in the summer months when the sun is shining and everything is more inviting, but we can get huge health benefits from nature as autumn and winter set in too. We need that boost to our mental health that nature gives us more than ever when longer nights set in, but the benefits don't stop there. Plants and trees naturally produce chemicals called phytoncides that help protect them against damage from bacteria, fungi and insects. As we spend time in green spaces, we breathe these chemicals in and they can help stimulate our own immune systems to produce more natural 'killer' cells, which are vital for fighting off viruses, perfect for winter when respiratory viruses are more common. Nature can also help our brains focus better; by spending time looking at wildlife and plants during our breaks at work, we can give the parts of our brain a rest that are needed for attention and focusing, so when we return to work or a task we need to complete, we will be more productive. Being out in natural light is good for improving sleep — so make the most of those shorter days and get out there!

Sometimes it can feel difficult to go out if the weather isn't quite right, but it is important to carry our good summer habits into autumn and winter. For those who do go outdoors regularly, spread the word and encourage your friends and family to do the same, so they too can reap the benefits of our natural world.



## WILD HOUSE CALL

You don't have to travel far for your dose of nature. Even in built-up areas, there are wild wonders to soothe your soul. Listen for the cheerful chirps of house sparrows in the bushes, or the soft cooing of pigeons perched on buildings.

If you have a garden, we've got lots of great tips to help attract even more wildlife at [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-gardening](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-gardening)



Dawn Cooper

Find inspiration to get outdoors and discover wildlife this winter with our seasonal blog: [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/blog/seasonal-spot](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/blog/seasonal-spot)

Dr Amir Khan is an ambassador for The Wildlife Trusts. He is an advocate for Green Prescribing and champions the benefit that being in nature has on health and wellbeing.

@DrAmirKhanGP  
@doctoramirkhan

# Your letters

We'd love to hear from you! Please send your letters to [editor@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org](mailto:editor@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org)

## Spiralling slug



Alan Hitchcock

Out in the garden I came across these unusual slug trails and then found a recently dead slug in the middle of them. Has anyone ever witnessed a slug travelling like this?

Jill Hitchcock

Ed: We sent this to a national expert who had seen it once before but doesn't know the reason. If you've seen it too or have an idea of the cause, please get in touch.

## Basking lizards

Yesterday I saw 13 lizards on one log, three adults and 10 young each about 3cm... I have never seen young in such numbers, so I thought I would report it to you in case it is of interest.

Brian Todd



Brian Todd

## What's this caterpillar?



Roger Collinge

I would be very grateful if you could identify the type of caterpillar shown in the attached photographs. The caterpillars were spotted by my two young grandchildren on a medium-sized weeping silver birch tree in my back garden. They are about 5cm in length and are well camouflaged amongst the catkins.

Roger Collinge

Ed: This is a buff-tip moth caterpillar. The adults do a great job of looking like a birch twig — great camouflage!

## KEEP IN TOUCH

Sign up to our e-newsletter: [email@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org](mailto:email@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org)  
[www.facebook.com/worcestershirewildlifetrust](https://www.facebook.com/worcestershirewildlifetrust)  
 @WorcsWT  
[www.flickr.com/groups/worcestershirewildlifetrust](https://www.flickr.com/groups/worcestershirewildlifetrust)  
[www.youtube.com/c/WorcsWildlifeTrustUK1](https://www.youtube.com/c/WorcsWildlifeTrustUK1)

## Social feeds



Dirk Perry

Beautiful curlew having a bath  
#UptonWarren  
@dirkperry3



Conrad Palmer

The caterpillar of the vapourer moth, found in the garden this afternoon. Hairy with bright orange spots, this caterpillar even has a mohawk!  
@palmer\_conrad



Claire Belle

[Our borders] are looking spectacular this year, filled with wildflowers, 'weeds' and nettles and a seeded lawn full of buttercups it is teeming with wildlife ❤️ I love our WILD garden!  
Claire A Belle

# Leave a gift for nature

'We are on this planet for a blink of an eye and in my own way I want my lifetime to have counted in some way. Not just while I am here but in leaving a legacy in my will I am leaving a legacy, I think, to life and to say thank you to the natural world for what it's done and to hopefully help support Worcestershire Wildlife Trust to carry on caring for nature and protecting more and more of it, which I think is essential.'

(Sandra, volunteer and member)



For more information:

Call 01905 754919

Email [enquiries@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org](mailto:enquiries@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org)

Visit [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/legacy](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/legacy)