



# Welcome



Now the dust from COP26 has settled, the challenge must be to actively deal with the causes of and impacts from climate change. The Trust has committed to reduce its operational carbon footprint (around 400 tonnes equivalent of CO2 per year) to at least net zero by 2030.

Although we are in the fortunate position of managing 3,000 acres of land that already sequesters carbon at a rate of at least three times our operational footprint, we have a strategy with a target to reduce actual emissions by half and to establish new wildlife habitats that will sequester the remaining carbon emissions. A win for wildlife and for the carbon crisis and a great opportunity to encourage and influence others to take similar action.

Around two thirds of the emissions come from grazing animals on our reserves, with the majority of the remainder coming from transport emissions from staff, volunteers and visitors to our facilities and events.

The People's Postcode Lottery has awarded a grant that has allowed us to employ a Carbon and Sustainability Office. Sean Webber will be working with staff, volunteers and members to support action across all of our work and a number of priority projects have been developed. These will allow us to switch to lower carbon alternatives for travel, to start to reduce emissions from grazing and to establish new habitats to sequester carbon.

*Colin Raven*

Colin Raven, Director



Dawn Morrise



William Lambourne



Paul Lane



Tom Marshall

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**Our promise to you**  
 We aim to meet the highest standards in how we communicate with you. If you want to change the way you hear from us at any time, just get in touch.

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**Cover photo:** Wendy Carter



## 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)

**Campaigning** You can play a vital role in raising awareness and helping to create a Wilder Future.  
[worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/take-action-wildlife](http://worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/take-action-wildlife)

**Local groups** Join one of our eight local groups to help make a difference and meet like-minded people.  
[worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/local-groups](http://worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/local-groups)

**Leave a legacy** If you've had a lifetime's pleasure from nature, help ensure its future by leaving us a gift in your Will.  
[worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/legacy](http://worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/legacy)

**Shop** Check our online shop for cards, calendars and gifts – all proceeds help our work  
[worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/shop](http://worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/shop)

# Our wild Housemates



Thanks to you

With your help we're mapping Worcestershire's wildlife. See page seven for more information.

Nature doesn't just exist on nature reserves; it's often closer to home. Silverfish lurk under skirting boards, spiders shake in darkened corners, mice might clatter in the loft, flies batter at windows and bumblebees wander in the borders. In older houses solitary bees exploit holes in soft mortar to create nests. Birds perch on roofs – wood pigeons on the aerial and crows on the ridge – and patches of orange lichen grow where their droppings have dropped. With sealed roofs, smooth walls, plastic window frames and soffits, though, there are no potential nest holes; modern houses are not bird friendly. Unless we help.

If you have house holes, in come house sparrows, starlings and swifts! The big bonus is to have house martins building nests under eaves. The chattering, beautiful birds building nests of mud pellets are one of the best things of spring. They are back! A sign of hope, warm weather and insects on the wing.

The Trust's first logo was a house martin. It was rather distorted, taken from a photograph in a book by Eric Hosking of a house martin flying up towards a nest, and was designed for the Trust by James Alder, an artist-designer at Worcester Porcelain. A flashier smooth-flying one appeared some years later. Designed by Trust member Ray Bishop, this one had a bright yellow sun in the centre; definitely a logo looking brightly to the future. Eventually, of course, all the Wildlife Trusts came together under one logo and we all became badgers.

What can be better than their chuckling arrival around the eaves, their short feathery legs just visible as they collect mud to build nests and their high-flying flight in search of insects? Not, perhaps, as elegant as fast-jet swifts or as friendly as the summer-harbingers of swallows but with an in-between homeliness. At the end of summer, long rows sit socially distanced on wires waiting for take-off to the mysteries of Africa.

Arriving in April and leaving between September and November, nobody knows exactly where our house martins spend their winter months. Dutch studies of stable isotopes in feathers grown by birds wintering in Africa are pinpointing central Cameroon and the southern Congo as likely wintering hotspots for the house martins that spend their summers in Netherlands. Do Worcestershire's birds join them? We think that they might fly high, eating and sleeping on the wing like swifts, and so are rarely seen in their wintering grounds. In Africa sudden spells of cold weather have caused thousands to drop down and die, in part from starvation because their aerial insect food had also perished.

We know, from recoveries of ringed birds over many years, that British swallows go to South Africa. Swallows, though, nest in barns and roost in reedbeds and willow scrub and are easy to catch and ring at both ends of their migration. It's much more difficult to do this with house martins, whose fragile nests of mud pellets are usually constructed under eaves high up on buildings or under bridges (only small numbers nest on sea cliffs and mountains). Entrance holes are small and it is difficult and risky to examine the contents and ring the young without damaging nests.

## Understanding house martins

It's not easy to survey house martins. Within an urban square mile, for example, there may be a breeding population with small numbers of nests



Martin Crookston

on many houses and they may or may not move residence from year to year with the overall population remaining much the same. Bridge nesting colonies tend to be much more stable but many have vanished since 1980.

We do know, however, that house martin populations are declining. The cause of the overall decline is not fully understood. Careful studies show that breeding success is lower now than it has been in the past. More nests are failing, in particular nests are collapsing and the young are dying from a shortage of insect food. House martins would normally produce two broods, sometimes three, each summer. Recent studies show that newly built nests and those built on plastic soffits tend to produce only one brood. Old nests, partially re-built the following year, and artificial nests, especially those used in previous years, are more likely to produce two broods than new nests. In part, this is because building a new nest takes the birds longer to get ready for the first brood, resulting in a lack of time for subsequent broods. This is compounded if insects are scarce as the adults take longer to collect food and the young grow more slowly.

A good supply of aerial insect food is essential for house martin survival. Whilst your garden can help to boost insect populations, house martins tend to seek out abundant sources

over water, meadows and sometimes over agricultural land. The decline in insects may be a cause of the decline in house martins in England.

## You can help

The lives of house martins, like everything else, are linked to many other plants and animals so their conservation depends on this supportive network functioning properly. Can we help? Yes!

We need more insects on the wing at the right time and that can only be fixed by land management that doesn't kill them all. Think about how your garden or community green space can contribute to this. We've plenty of ideas on our website on how to create spaces for insects to thrive in.

We also need artificial house martin nest boxes to enable breeding to proceed earlier and faster so that more broods can be raised. If you've got old natural nests on your house, leave them where they are and give your house martins a helping hand. If we have a dry spring, why not create mud patches in your garden to help them gather the material they need?



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

**1,000+**  
beaks of mud per nest.

**41%** UK insect species face extinction.

**57%** decline in house martin numbers between 1969 and 2018.

**Near threatened** on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's list of species that are globally threatened with extinction.

Seen a house martin? Let us know:  
[www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings)  
Download (from 23rd March) your free guide to helping house martins:  
[www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk](http://www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk)  
Boost insect numbers:  
[www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/action-insects](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/action-insects)

# Local news



Wendy Carter

## News from Dropping Well Farm

We are thrilled to share with you the news that the Trust completed the purchase of 95 acres of land at Dropping Well Farm in October as our winter magazine was going to press. Huge thanks to the 1,000+ members and supporters who contributed to our fundraising efforts, alongside our funders the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Severn Waste Services, The

Banister Charitable Trust and The Rowlands Trust. We raised over £1m that, alongside funds from gifts left to the Trust by members, is enabling us to create a connected area of over 600 acres managed as nature reserves.

Visitors will start to see some changes to the management of the land, with flower mixes now sown. We have been providing supplementary

food to birds, which has led to flocks of around 200 finches. Fences will be put up to enable us to graze the fields and to mark the new nature trail. Beccy, our new Saving Worcestershire Heathlands Project Officer, joined the Trust at the start of February so keep a look out on our website, social media and e-newsletter for the latest project news.

## Welcome

We are delighted to welcome three local companies as our latest Corporate Members. OCM Business Systems Limited are a Pershore-based company and experts in the safe and responsible disposal of IT and EPoS assets. SPAL Automotive UK are based in Worcester and specialise in the design and manufacture of cooling fans and centrifugal blowers. Clent Hills Vets are small animal specialists with three practices across Worcestershire, including a Pet Rehab and Fitness Centre.



Harry Green

Paul and Jenning of OCM Business Systems Ltd planting trees at Tiddesley Wood.



Nick Upton, 2020VISION

## We bet you didn't know

Over 80% of toads return to breed in the ponds they were born in themselves and some travel up to 2 km to get there. Report your sightings of toads, frogs and spawn at [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings)



Rebekah Nash



## Say hello to our new badger

In January we gave our badger a makeover. Our colleagues from other Wildlife Trusts undertook market research and got their creative flair flowing in order to incorporate familiar and much-loved elements of our old brand into a fresher and more modern design. Our website and social media pages have already made the move and we will be changing the logo on literature, signage, staff and volunteer clothing, vehicles etc as and when items reach the end of their life. We hope you like it!

## Photo competition

There's still time to sift through your photos or head outside to capture what could be a winning image.

Whether you've got a wildlife-filled garden, a nature-rich local greenspace or have been soaking up the wild on our nature reserves, we're looking for your photos of Worcestershire's wildlife and wildlife-friendly places to feature in our 2023 calendar.

We're looking forward to seeing six of your best by Monday 4th April. Find out how to enter on our website [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/photography-competition](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/photography-competition)

## Digital magazine

Many thanks to those of you who responded to our digital magazine email and message in your winter magazine. If you'd like to try out, or would prefer to receive, a digital version of the magazine, just head to [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/magazineMar22](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/magazineMar22) to see what it's all about and let us know your preference.

## 30 Days Wild

We know that many of you don't need an excuse to go wild but why not sign up for this year's 30 Days Wild, taking place during June, to receive a pack of goodies and regular emails full of inspiration on how to make nature a part of everyday life.

Sign-ups open in April – don't forget to go wild [www.wildlifetrusts.org/30DaysWild](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/30DaysWild)

## Events

- Our final online talk of the season will be about our project at Dropping Well Farm. Book your place for Sandy Badlands: wasteground, highwaymen and wildlife on Thursday 21st April.
- A few indoor talks remain in our events calendar but our local groups are now turning their attentions to exploring the outdoors.

[www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on) for more information and details on how to book



Paul Lane

## Wilder Worcester

We welcomed community groups to our launch at Newtown Green in December. It was a great opportunity to see the fantastic work that is happening there to improve biodiversity and access to nature for all.

In collaboration with Platform Housing, bird feeders have been put up in sheltered housing sites in Worcester; having nature on our doorsteps is important for our health and wellbeing. It was lovely to meet so many local residents at a Winter Wildlife Walk with the Worcester Canal Group and chat with so many like-minded people.

Covid restrictions have made things challenging but with spring around the corner, we're looking forward to lots of events and activities to inspire everyone to love wildlife and to help nature on our doorsteps. Check out our website and social media or sign up for our e-newsletter for updates [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wilder-worcester](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wilder-worcester)



Tom Ward

## Brown hairstreak success

Volunteers at Lower Smite Farm and from the West Midlands branch of Butterfly Conservation are celebrating after finding eggs of the brown hairstreak butterfly. These small and elusive butterflies only lay eggs on young blackthorn. A single egg was discovered at Smite in the winter of 2020 so volunteers joined forces to find more in December. Five eggs were found on the day and Trust volunteers found another four the week after, including a rare find of three together.

In the 1970s, one of the few populations of this scarce butterfly was confined to Grafton Wood, now jointly owned by the Trust and Butterfly Conservation. Following years of conservation efforts, they have spread north to Redditch, south to Pershore and east to Warwickshire. Butterfly Conservation are hoping that Worcester residents will join the search this year to see if they're now found further west.

[www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/news/brown-hairstreak-butterfly-success](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/news/brown-hairstreak-butterfly-success)

## Thank you

A huge thank you to all the wonderful local businesses who raised over £4000 for the Trust by selling our calendars and Christmas cards in their shops last year.

Thank you too to all of you who bought cards and gifts from them and from our online shop [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/shop](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/shop)

## Elections to Trust Council

Elections to the Trust's governing body will take place at the AGM on Wednesday 12th October 2022. Nominations must be made on the nomination form, obtainable from the secretary or director at the Trust office, no later than Friday 10th June 2022. Nominations will require six proposers who are members of the Trust. Details of members standing for election or re-election will be circulated to all Trust members with the summer issue of Worcestershire Wildlife.

**Thank you!** With your help, we can buy Green Farm and help even more wildlife (See pages 20–21).

**£560,000** the total needed need to buy and restore land and engage people.

**300** years since Monkwood was last extended. There's been a woodland on the site for over **1,000** years.

**59** acres of land at Green Farm.

**40%** expansion of area managed as nature reserves.

Expand hedgerow connectivity for Monkwood dormice populations.

Meadows to be managed to help butterflies, including the rare wood whites.

Working with at least **4** local schools.

**2** new/updated nature trails.

# UK news

## The weird, wonderful and worrying

Cetaceans take centre stage in our round-up of marine news from the last 12 months, with success stories, tragic tales and strange sightings. There was hope for humpback whales, with strong numbers recorded around the southwest and further sightings in Scotland. One individual, named Pi, delighted whale watchers on the Isles of Scilly for over two months. The surge in sightings in recent years reflects populations recovering after bans on commercial whaling.

It wasn't all good news though, with large numbers of seals and cetaceans reported stranded across the UK, including a minke whale calf that tragically had to be put down after stranding in the Thames. In Cornwall alone, over 170 cetaceans and 247 seals were stranded, with a further 51 cetaceans recorded stranding in Devon. Many of these animals showed signs of injury from fishing gear or propellers, including a humpback whale off Looe Island that was caught in fishing lines. One of the stranded animals in Cornwall was a striped dolphin, which are common in the Mediterranean but seldom seen around the UK.

This wasn't the only surprising cetacean sighting in the south of the UK. Two orcas from the Hebrides made a scene-stealing appearance off the cliff-top Minnack Theatre in Cornwall – the most southerly sighting of members of this group of killer whales in over 50 years – and white-beaked dolphins, usually found in subarctic waters, were seen in Essex for the first time since 2000.

Whales and dolphins weren't alone in popping up in unexpected places. In 2021 two walrus were recorded in the UK, with one, nicknamed Wally,

spending weeks in south Wales and then the Isles of Scilly. A second (known as Freya) briefly visited Northumberland before being spotted in Shetland. There was also a pufferfish found washed up on a Cornish beach, which is an oceanic species that rarely comes this far north.

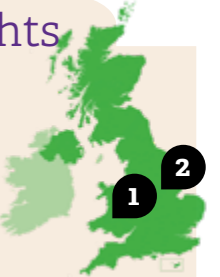
These unusual sightings provide further evidence of the impacts of climate change on our seas. Temperature changes can cause disruption to feeding habits and breeding cycles, driving animals to move out of their usual range. Some species are shifting their distribution completely. The ringneck blenny, a small fish normally found in the Eastern Atlantic or Mediterranean, has become common in Cornwall's Fal estuary, with further signs of breeding in the English Channel.

Our marine life faces many threats in addition to climate change, including disturbance from recreational activities. Cornwall Wildlife Trust reported that disturbances of marine wildlife have tripled since 2014, with an increase of jet skis and motorboats a major cause for concern. Elsewhere, The Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales witnessed a seal pup being abandoned after people got too close to it. Surveys by Dorset Wildlife Trust recorded damage to the seabed caused by the anchors of large cruise ships, moored off the coast due to the pandemic.

There was also plenty to celebrate last year, with good news for kelp forests, seagrass meadows, oyster beds and many more habitats and species. In March, a new byelaw was passed to stop damaging fishing practices off the Sussex coast. To speed up the area's recovery, the Sussex Kelp Restoration Project will restore a vast 200 km<sup>2</sup> of kelp forest,

## UK highlights

Discover how The Wildlife Trusts are helping wildlife across the UK



### 1. Wild in Wales

Radnorshire Wildlife Trust has purchased a 164-acre farm in mid-Wales, with plans to transform it into a haven for wildlife. Initial steps to bring nature back to the former livestock farm will include scrub development to provide shelter for wildlife. The Wildlife Trust will work with neighbours, local farmers and landowners to create more space for nature in the region. [wtru.st/mid-wales-farm](http://wtru.st/mid-wales-farm)

### 2. A city sanctuary

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust welcomed plans for a new 'Green Heart' in Nottingham city centre, after putting forward a bold ambition to transform a derelict former shopping centre into wildlife-rich greenspace. The vision is billed as a blueprint for sustainable city centres in a post-Covid world. [wtru.st/green-heart](http://wtru.st/green-heart)

providing feeding and nursery grounds for molluscs, shrimp and cuttlefish.

Seagrass habitats also got a much needed boost. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust transplanted seeds and plants to areas where seagrass has previously flourished, whereas Manx Wildlife Trust discovered a new seagrass meadow, Cornwall Wildlife Trust mapped seagrass regrowth in areas where moorings had been removed and Cumbria Wildlife Trust carried out the first surveys of seagrass on mudflats off Walney Island for over 20 years.

There are even more sea success stories in our full round-up, which you can read at: [wildlifetrusts.org/marine-review-21](http://wildlifetrusts.org/marine-review-21)

# Worcestershire's nature reserves

Wendy Carter



**Those of you who are familiar with our reserves in the south of the county may know that David Molloy, our Southern Reserves Officer, moved on in November to work for the Forestry Commission, where he will now be advising on woodland stewardship agreements. As these include some of the nature reserves he used to manage, we expect to continue a close collaboration with David.**

We are very pleased to welcome Tomos Holloway as David's replacement, responsible for sites including Hill Court Farm, Tiddesley Wood and our cluster of grassland reserves in the southwest of the county. Tomos has a background in farming and with the National Trust land management team. Do say hello if you meet him whilst visiting your favourite of our southern reserves.

## Changing seasons, changing views

Winter is the season of woodland management and, as we come into spring, we start to see the fruits of our labour as newly opened areas receive more light and new flushes of woodland wildflowers appear, woodland birds set up nesting territories in the developing scrub in areas previously thinned and mature trees spread into the space created for

them, becoming the ancient trees of the future.

This winter we created a new coppice plot in the north of Grafton Wood and undertook forestry operations in Tiddesley Wood to tackle diseased ash trees alongside the busy road on the southern boundary. We also thinned the tree canopies in small parts of Blackhouse, Monk, Trench and Chaddesley woods. The very wet conditions and lack of hard winter frosts made it too muddy to extract timber on some of these sites but we are still planning to remove and use much of it, while leaving some as deadwood for our wonderful woodland beetles.

## Dropping Well Farm update

We're continuing to build on the great first year of management at Dropping Well Farm, our new heathland creation project. The winter bird food mixes have been very popular with flocks of goldfinches, helping to fill the winter 'hungry gap' for our farmland birds. Work on the water supply and fencing to allow grazing is well underway and we will be continuing ecological monitoring to see what species our changes bring. Our new project officer started in February and is getting to know our local communities to increase

their understanding of the value of heathlands and how to get involved to help improve the site, and their own spaces, for wildlife.

## Conservation grazing

Livestock are often a vital part of managing our nature-rich places and being able to keep them on site safely is essential when working with our many farming partners who graze our reserves for us. We're often very excited to tell you when we put in new fences because we know they are securing the grazing required to keep our amazing grasslands in their best condition. We're, therefore, very pleased to have just finished re-fencing our Boynes Coppice and Melrose Farm Meadows reserves, allowing us to put sheep on them for the first time in two years. Boynes has been steadily improving through our management, with a wonderful show of green-winged orchids in late spring, and reintroducing grazing will continue this improvement.

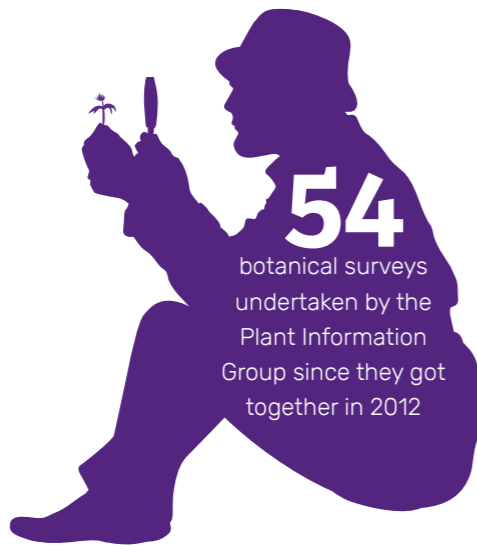
Sadly, we had a sheep killed and several others injured in a dog attack at the end of 2021 at the nearby Nash's Meadow. This incident was due to a normally friendly dog off a lead and away from its owner and highlights that even the best dog can chase and kill wildlife and livestock. A sad reminder that dogs should always be on a lead when you're visiting a nature reserve.



Wendy Carter

## Knowing what's there

As we move into warmer weather, thoughts turn to ecological monitoring. Understanding what we have on our reserves and how it responds to our management is a really important part of our work and a huge job across over 3,000 acres on multiple sites. We rely on information provided by incredibly dedicated volunteers who look at everything from insects and birds and plants and mammals from many of our rich and complicated reserves. The Plant Information Group is one of these dedicated bands. As the name suggests, they specialise in looking at the botany for us, whether on already excellent grassland like Eades Meadow or those in the process of restoration like Hollybed



Farm or Nash's meadows. Based around the Malvern area, 2022 celebrates their 10th year of helping us measure the success of our work and I want to say

thank you for all their assistance over the last decade, through rain and shine.

As already mentioned, monitoring our reserves is vitally important and we always need more information, so if you'd like to get involved with recording your local reserve, do please get in contact.

## Upton Warren – access to The Flashes

At the time of writing, we continue discussions with Aztec Adventure who manage the sailing lake at Upton Warren and whose land we have to cross to reach our entrance to The Flashes. After a spate of thefts and safety issues they removed out-of-hours pedestrian

access, which has caused problems when they lock their car park. Visiting during normal opening hours is not usually affected.

Rights of access to The Flashes have never been formalised but we have never encountered problems until the recent security upgrades. There is no straightforward solution that offers open access for our members whilst keeping Aztec's site secure. We have proposed a pedestrian gate and combination lock, the code of which could be offered to members who'd like it, but there are still concerns that this compromises the site's security. Ideally, we would wish for a separate access point but there are other legal and practical issues with this. We will keep you updated as this progresses.

## Brown hairstreaks fly to new heights

This priority species under the UK's Biodiversity Action Plans has a stronghold in Worcestershire and is found on several of our nature reserves such as Grafton Wood, Trench Wood and Humpy Meadow. Following the finding of eggs at Lower Smite Farm in 2020 and 2021 (see news pages), it is very satisfying to report this conservation success story.



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

## HIGH FIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Photos by: Lesley Betts, Jill Orme, Wendy Carter, Dale Sutton, John Bridges.



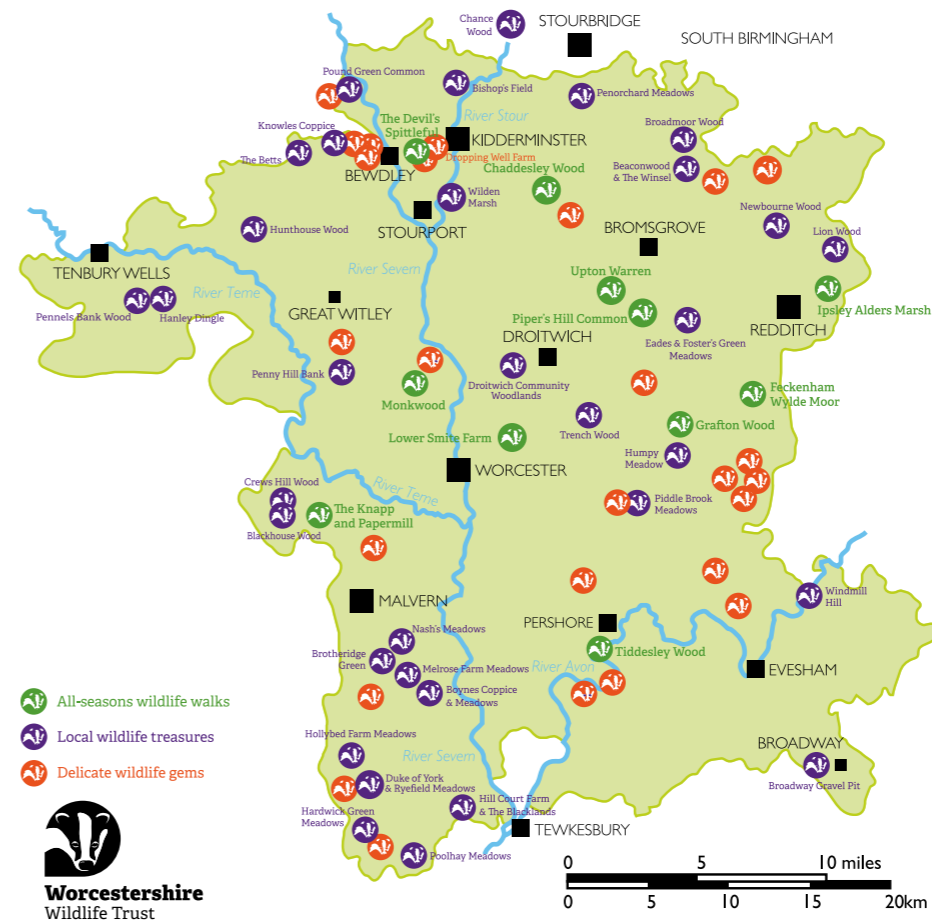
1. Blackcap – claiming their territory in bramble and scrub.
2. Blackthorn – blossom appearing in hedgerows
3. Crow garlic – rush-like stem in meadows, hedgerows and verges
4. Daubenton's bat – foraging over ponds and lakes
5. Great crested newt – emerging from hibernation.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Brown hairstreaks are the UK's largest hairstreak butterflies. Laid on young blackthorn shoots, their eggs are about the size of a pin head.

William Lambourne



Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

Want to help record wildlife on our nature reserves? Get in touch [volunteer@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org](mailto:volunteer@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org)



# Watching wildlife



**As Community Wildlife Warden visiting our nature reserves weekly, I am constantly amazed at the biodiversity they hold, as I'm sure you are too. Whether watching wildlife on our nature reserves or going for a stroll in our local green spaces, how can we get the greatest possible pleasure from this wild bounty while still protecting it?**

## Always something different

One of the great appeals of watching wildlife is how the changing seasons bring fresh interest. In spring, look for birds in full song, trees in blossom and carpets of wildflowers. By midsummer, butterflies are one of the jewels to be discovered. Through autumn, look out for fungi and come winter there are wildfowl on wetlands and parties of small birds foraging in woodlands. Worcestershire's variety of flora and fauna means that you can find something to excite your senses throughout the year.

## Put nature first

It's hard to over-emphasise this. When visiting green spaces, keep nature in mind – we are privileged to share its space. This is especially important on our nature reserves, areas that are dedicated to the protection of nature and that are the last refuges for many species. Please stick to designated paths or nature trails as shown by signage; don't search for wildlife away from these as you may trample new growth or disturb wildlife. If you're walking your dog, please keep it on the lead and remove the poo; even outside the all-important bird breeding season, many species (not just birds), still feed, roost or hibernate at ground level.

## A constant source of learning

There is always something new to learn about and discover. If you're

new to watching wildlife my advice is to get to know the common species – your garden is an excellent place to start – as this allows you to more easily pick out something different when you see or hear it. Our website and social media channels are a great source of information for tips on what wildlife you can find near you throughout the year.

## Take a pause

It is all too easy when out walking to miss much of what is present. It's surprising how much noise we make – talking, footsteps, rustling clothing etc. You might have your hood up or a hat pulled over your ears, masking the smaller sounds of wildlife. By regularly stopping and listening you will hear so much more; a bird's soft contact call, for example. By pausing to look around, things will catch your eye – a small wildflower, a resting butterfly or a slow-worm silently slipping away. Not only does moving more quietly disturb fewer species but it can really help to immerse you in the nature that surrounds you.

## Stepping stones and corridors

According to the 2019 State of Nature report, one in seven UK species is at risk of extinction. Wildlife that was once considered common is now under serious threat through loss of habitat, climate change and other reasons. Our nature reserves have become island sanctuaries, last outposts, for many species, which is why it's so important to protect and respect these precious places. Nature reserves are vital reservoirs but if we can re-establish corridors, the 'natural networks' that once existed, through our landscape (including your gardens) we can help our wildlife to recover.

## Trust the Trust

Our conservation teams are experts in their field. Everything we do is done to maintain the health of the habitats and

wildlife we manage. There is sometimes a lack of appreciation for the need to actively manage our reserves, be it the habitat or even the visitors.

We welcome visitors to many of our nature reserves and want you to enjoy these special places but everyone has a role to play in protecting the wildlife that lives there. Whilst one person leaving a path may cause minimal damage, the cumulative effect of everyone following suit can be devastating. With fragile habitats and vulnerable species that are easily susceptible to damage or disturbance, please 'think wildlife' when you're visiting our precious nature reserves.

## Making your records count

If we are to monitor the health of our wildlife and make informed decisions regarding its conservation, we need to know what we have and where it is. We welcome all records from throughout Worcestershire, no matter how insignificant they may seem. Visit [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/recording-your-sightings](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/recording-your-sightings) to find full details of how to submit your sightings.

## Be a wildlife ambassador

As Trust members, you're perfectly placed to lead by example and, if you're happy to, educate others who might not be so knowledgeable. For me, being a regular Trust presence on our busier reserves is an extremely rewarding experience and a hopefully invaluable source of engagement and education for visitors. If you think you have the right qualities to engage with our visitors and are interested in volunteering to help with this, visit [www.worcestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/volunteer](http://www.worcestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/volunteer)



**Ion Riley**, WWT Community Wildlife Warden. A life-long birdwatcher with a recent interest in butterflies.



Discover more Worcestershire wildlife.

[@worcestershirewildlifetrust](https://www.facebook.com/worcestershirewildlifetrust)

[@WorcsWT](https://twitter.com/WorcsWT)

[YouTube Worcestershire Wildlife Trust](https://www.youtube.com/WorcestershireWildlifeTrust)

# Worcestershire's stunning shieldbugs

With their shield-shaped body and habit of sitting openly in sunny positions in many different habitats, shieldbugs are very familiar insects. They belong to the Order Hemiptera (half-wings), or true-bugs, and have mouth parts modified into a long beak, known as a rostrum, for sucking fluids from plants and in some cases other insects. They pass through an incomplete metamorphosis; hatching as miniature versions of the adults, shedding their skins several times as they grow (there is no pupal stage like butterflies). They generally overwinter as adults, emerging in spring to lay eggs with the new generation maturing at the end of the summer ready for the cycle to start again. If threatened they release a foul smelling, bad tasting liquid, which has won them the alternative name of stink-bugs.



Hawthorn shieldbug, Wendy Carter

Discover more: [www.britishbugs.org.uk/Provisional\\_atlas\\_of\\_shieldbugs\\_and\\_allies\\_2018.pdf](http://www.britishbugs.org.uk/Provisional_atlas_of_shieldbugs_and_allies_2018.pdf)



Gary Farmer



Gary Farmer



Gary Farmer

## Green Shieldbug *Palomena prasina*

This is the most regularly encountered shieldbug being common in many habitats, including gardens, where it will sit very openly on a leaf in the sunshine. The adults can usually be found from April to June and again from mid-August. They are bright green with a dark area where the wing membranes overlap but they turn purple/brown in time with the autumn leaves, giving them camouflage during their winter hibernation.

## Hairy Shieldbug/Sloe Bug *Dolycoris baccarum*

This is another common species and has two commonly used English names. Hairy shieldbug describes it well, especially the nymphs that are covered in fine hairs. Sloe bug is an odd choice of name as it can be found on a great many different plants but I have never found it on sloes. This species is often encountered on seed heads of a range of plants from buttercups to dandelions.

## Spiked Shieldbug *Picromerus bidens*

This is a robust predatory species, feeding mainly on the caterpillars of moths, butterflies and sawflies but will also feed on adult insects including other shieldbugs. This dull brown bug is easily overlooked as it sits in semi-shaded areas patiently waiting for lunch. The English name comes from its sharp-pointed 'shoulders', which is echoed in the scientific species name *bidens* 'two teeth'. Unusually for shieldbugs, spiked shieldbugs overwinter as eggs.



Gary Farmer



Gary Farmer



Rosemary Winnall

## Forget-me-not Shieldbug *Sehirus luctuosus*

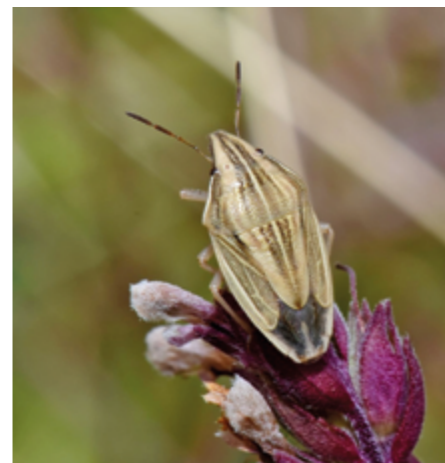
This is one of several small black shieldbugs that at first glance could be mistaken for a beetle. Closer examination reveals the wing membranes and rostrum characteristic of the true bugs. It seems uncommon in Worcestershire but if you have forget-me-nots in your garden it's worth looking on the ground beneath plants, especially in May. It is occasionally seen climbing the foodplant to feed on seeds.

## Brassica Shieldbug *Eurydema oleracea*

Until recently this pretty shieldbug would have been a rare sight in Worcestershire. In recent years though it has been seen almost anywhere where its foodplants grow. These are members of the cabbage family ranging from horseradish to lady's smock. This is an unusual shieldbug in that it has different colour forms. It is always shiny black but with a distinct pattern of white, red or occasionally orange patches.

## Parent Bug *Elasmucha grisea*

The aptly named parent bug lays its eggs usually on birch or alder leaves in June and then sits over them as if incubating them. She does this to keep parasites and small predators away. The mother continues to protect her brood as they grow and the sight of a mother bug sitting on nymphs all wearing what appears to be striped pyjamas is a wonder of the insect world.



Gary Farmer



Gary Farmer



Gary Farmer

## Bishop's Mitre *Aelia acuminata*

Many groups of insects are expanding their range further north especially since the end of the twentieth century and shieldbugs are no exception. The bishop's mitre shieldbug was found for the first time in Worcestershire in 2001 and there has been a rapid increase in their distribution and number. Search in grassland in summer for this is slim shieldbug, which supposedly resembles the ceremonial headgear (or mitre) of a bishop.

## Forest Bug/Red-legged Shieldbug *Pentatoma rufipes*

This large, glossy dark brown shieldbug is common in shrubs and trees in many parts of the county. It has bright orange/red legs and a corresponding spot in the middle of its back. Its nymphs are mottled browns and greens and blend in perfectly with the tree bark where they feed on sap from the tree as well as savaging dead insects. Unusually for shieldbugs it overwinters as nymphs.

## Woundwort Shieldbug *Eysarcoris fabrcii*

Allow hedge woundwort to grow in a sunny spot in your garden and you will almost certainly be rewarded by the sight of these little bugs, looking like pieces of polished bronze sitting on the flat leaves. They can be found at all life stages through most of the summer with adults only really absent between generations in July, overwintering in the soil below the plant.



**Gary Farmer**, WWT member. Bonkers about bugs and nutty about nature. Gary is Manager of Vale Landscape Heritage Trust

# Green Farm – reaching out

**Monkwood is one of the Trust's most beloved nature reserves. In spring, the bluebell displays are spectacular but throughout the year wonderful wildlife abounds from fungi and butterflies to woodland birds and dormice.**

As many of you will have heard, we have a once in a generation opportunity to extend Monkwood for the first time in over 300 years and we are looking for your support to make this possible. We have the chance to purchase 59 acres of land at Green Farm, which is adjacent to the western edge of the woodland. With the widely documented decline in many species, it is vital that we protect brilliant areas like Monkwood by making them bigger, better and more connected. Only through doing this can we look to reverse nature's decline and contribute towards the target of 30% of land for nature by 2030.

Monkwood and the land at Green Farm lie a few miles to the north of Worcester in the parish of Grimley, between the villages of Sinton Green and Wichenford. It is likely that Monkwood has been in existence for over 1,000 years and possibly since the last ice age.

## History of Monkwood

Monkwood was owned for centuries by Worcester Priory. The first reference to Monckewood is recorded in 1240 although woodland in the old manor of Grimley is mentioned as far back as 961. A plan from 1746 shows the boundaries of the wood almost exactly as they are today.

Monkwood was purchased by LG Harris & Company in the 1950s to produce timber for brush handles. Large areas were clear-felled and replanted with a mixture of native and non-native trees. Despite this, the wood retained much of its ancient character

and wildlife interest; the methods they used almost recreated traditional coppiced conditions and certain woodland wildlife thrived.

The wood had always been known for its butterflies and when LG Harris came to sell the wood in the 1980s, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust was assisted in its purchase by Butterfly Conservation. The two organisations have worked together to improve the habitat and gradually reduce the number of non-native trees. We have a long-term plan to restore the woodland to its former glory.

## Green Farm

Buying the 59 acres of land at Green Farm would enable us to expand the area that is managed as a nature reserve. In doing so, we will better protect Monkwood and enable better connection across the wider landscape for wildlife.

The land is divided into two areas by an ancient hedgerow, believed to be over 1,000 years old, running north to south. To the east of the hedgerow are wildflower-rich meadows that abut Monkwood. We plan to maintain and restore these meadows to benefit

the array of butterflies found at Monkwood and to increase the plants found there. To the west of the main hedgerow, we will be increasing the number of trees through a combination of natural regeneration and tree planting. As part of this work, we will reintroduce an orchard and create areas of woodland pasture. We will also protect the many amazing hedgerows on the site and improve hedgerow cover where needed, which will help to support Monkwood's dormice population and other species.

## Improving access

Alongside the ecological improvements, we hope that this wider project will allow us to improve the experience of visitors to the site - from improving the car park and track surfaces to making the site more accessible for those using wheelchairs and pushchairs. We're planning to revamp the nature trails and will add more information about the wood and its wildlife at points throughout the site. We'll hopefully work with the local community, particularly local schools and the team at nearby Wild Goose Rural Training CIC.



Paul Lane

# to ancient woodland

## Monkwood needs your help

To achieve this vision, we need to raise £560,000 to purchase, restore and manage this land. Our friends at the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation have purchased the site on our behalf in order to give us time to fundraise to buy it ourselves. If we fail to raise the funds needed, the land will be sold on the open market and has no legal protection.

We have made a good start in making this possible. Thanks to a donation of £100,000 from Severn Waste Services and two major private donations from Trust supporters, we have raised £210,000 towards the purchase cost. The Trust has approached the National Lottery Heritage Fund for support and we are also approaching other Trusts and Foundations for their help. We expect to need to raise at least £50,000 from members so please consider supporting our vital appeal if you are able to do so.



**Mike Perry**, Head of Resources – Mike grew up in a farming family in Worcestershire and explores nature with his wife and sons.



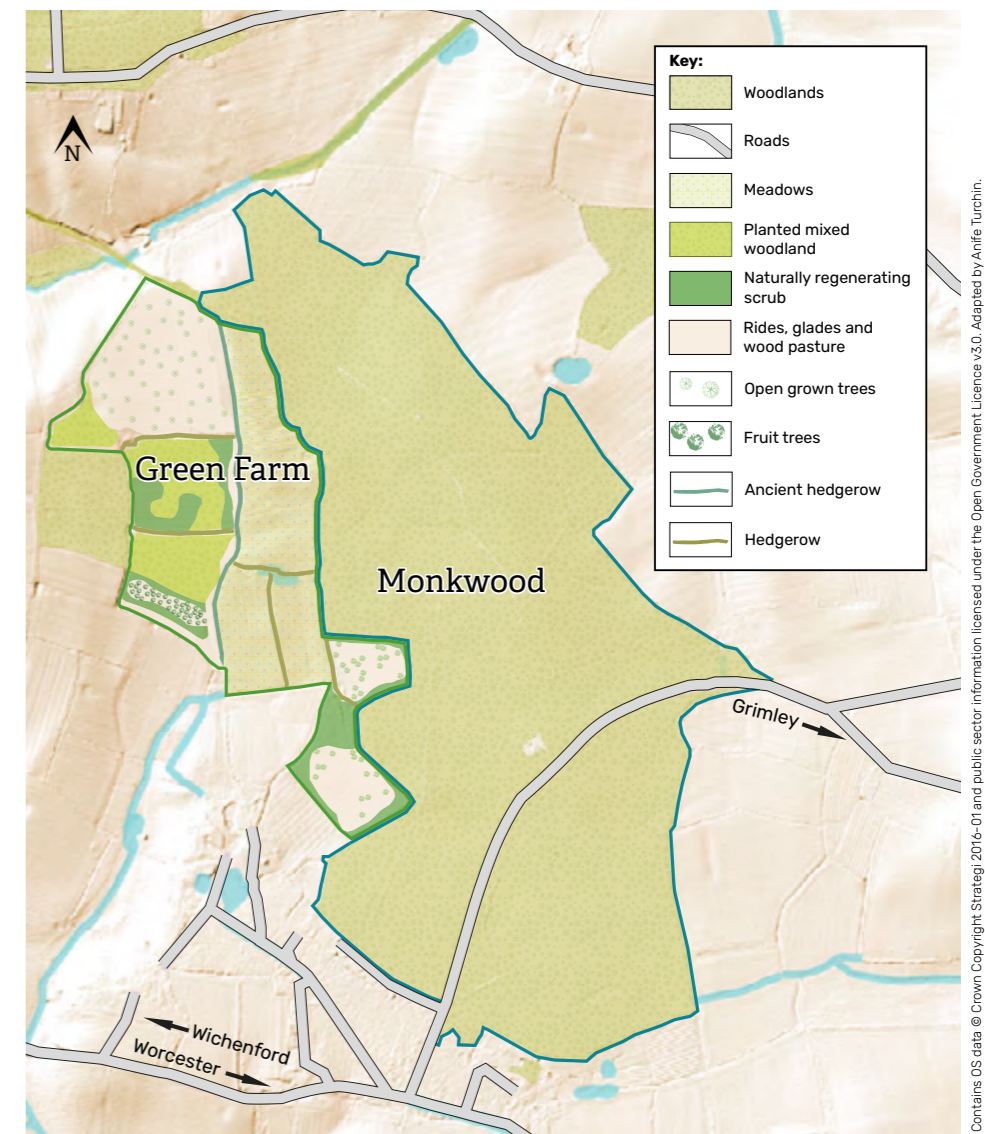
You can make a donation through any of the following:

- Donate online at [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/appeals/green-farm](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/appeals/green-farm) by credit or debit card, or PayPal.
- Donate by cheque by sending a cheque payable to Worcestershire Wildlife Trust to Lower Smite Farm, Smite Hill, Hindlip, Worcester, WR3 8SZ.
- Donate over the phone by calling 01905 754919.

Thank you.



Poppy Morris



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# Six places to see beetles

Did you know that there are over 4,000 species of beetle in the UK? These incredible insects come in a huge array of shapes and sizes. There are longhorn beetles sporting oversized antennae, broad-bodied ladybirds, slender rove beetles and weevils with oddly elongated faces. Many of our beetles have fantastically evocative names to match their looks or lifestyle. Head out on a beetle safari and you could meet tigers, stags, wasps and even minotaurs! Beetles fill vital roles in nature, including pollination, predation and the recycling of dead wood, dung and dead animals. One of the best things about beetles is that you can find them almost anywhere, from parks and gardens to meadows and moorlands or even beneath the surface of ponds. But some places are beetle hotspots – here are six of our favourite places to see beetles:

## See the spectacle for yourself



### 1. Ayr Gorge Woodlands Wildlife Reserve, Scottish Wildlife Trust

This ancient woodland is full of beetles. You may be lucky enough to spot rhinoceros beetles crawling over old logs, two-banded longhorn beetles resting on fence posts or even a beautiful thorn-tipped longhorn beetle perfectly camouflaged on a lichen covered tree trunk.

**Where:** Failford, KA5 5TF.

### 2. Highgate Common, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

An ancient lowland heath brimming with beetles, including the incredible glow worm with its bioluminescent behind. Other impressive insects you could spot include black oil beetles, bloody-nosed beetles, green tiger beetles and minotaur beetles.

**Where:** Swindon,, DY7 5BS.

### 3. Upton-upon-Severn, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

From late May onwards, if you're lucky, you might spot stag beetles wandering about on pavements and fences. Visit on a balmy evening in the hope of watching one fly past, looking for a mate. Let us know if you spot one.

**Where:** Upton and surrounding villages.

### 4. Balls Wood, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

This varied woodland with its sunlit rides is a wonderful place for beetles that depend on deadwood but it also has an unusually large number of ponds, supporting a range of water beetles. You might even spot the rare poplar leaf-rolling weevil.

**Where:** Hertford Heath, SG13 7PW.

### 5. Sydenham Hill Wood, London Wildlife Trust

London Wildlife Trust's oldest nature reserve is home to many rare and scarce beetles, from metallic jewel beetles and tiny flower beetles to the impressive stag beetle, the largest species in the UK, growing to over 7cm long.

**Where:** Sydenham Hill, SE26 6LS.

### 6. Bystock Pools, Devon Wildlife Trust

Bystock's mosaic of habitats provides a home to many different beetles. Whirligig beetles spin across the ponds, tiger beetles hunt the heathlands and soldier beetles march over meadow wildflowers. If you're really lucky, you could spot the greenish glimmer of a glow worm on a summer evening.

**Where:** Near Exmouth, EX8 5EE.

Find out how you can help beetles and other imperiled insects at [wildlifetrusts.org/action-for-insects](http://wildlifetrusts.org/action-for-insects)

## Did you spot any beetles?



We'd love to know how your search went. Please tweet us your best photos!

@wildlifetrusts



Andy Sands



# Life in dung

Words: **Rosemary Winnall**  
Photo: **Wendy Carter**

**A shiny beetle with quivering splayed antennae is scenting the air for her next meal. Then she takes flight, zigzagging upwind until she locates a mouth-watering fresh cow pat and down she drops. She hungrily sucks up some of the highly nutritious bacterial soup to strengthen her for the job ahead as she has more eggs to lay. She must act quickly as there is competition for this valuable commodity.**

☘ Dung beetles are great recyclers and without them our world would soon disappear under animal droppings.

☘ There are about 65 different species of dung beetle in Britain; some are dung dwellers and some are dung tunnellers.

☘ To avoid competition, the beetles might arrive at different times of the day, in different seasons, in different habitats or use different sections of the pat.

☘ Many dung beetle species are in decline. Ivermectin (an anti-parasite drug administered to cattle) can disorientate the beetles, make them infertile or kill them. This affects the whole food chain and is a big threat to our dung biodiversity.

☘ Other creatures that visit to feed on dung or invertebrates, and/or breed, include some flies, beetles, butterflies, woodlice, earwigs, centipedes, millipedes, spiders, mites, slugs, worms, nematodes and birds. Each pile of dung has its own ecosystem.

☘ Dwellers (usually small) live and breed within the droppings.

☘ Tunnellers dig holes (some over 1m deep) beneath the dung in which they lay one or a few eggs. They often work in pairs, the male helping the female to provision the nest tunnel with dung and protect it from invaders. The males often have fighting horns, ridges and spines (like the minotaur beetle).

☘ The pair often overwinter together in the tunnel and look after the dung balls so that they don't go mouldy.

☘ Some dung beetles are specialists and will only be found on specific dung eg horse manure, chicken droppings, bat guano.



# Right Tree Right Place

**When it comes to tackling the climate crisis, sometimes it's hard to see the wood for the trees, as Barnaby Coupe explores.**

**For many people, trees and woodlands are emblematic of our deepest connections with nature. They are a constant in our culture and histories, from the Hundred Acre Wood to the adventures of Robin Hood, and with good reason. Our native woodlands are vibrant, wild and shrouded in mystery – the perfect place for nature to thrive.**

Ancient native woodlands in particular hold a wealth of life, with a complex weave of ecological networks and relationships between a huge array of diverse species. For example, the mighty oak, a staple of British woods, provides habitat for more than 2,300 species, from woodland birds to fungi. These long-standing woodlands also possess trees of varying ages, with old trees offering nest holes for birds like redstarts and pied flycatchers, dead and dying trees providing essential habitat for fungi and insects like stag beetles, and young trees and dense, thorny scrub creating nesting sites for warblers and nightingales. Stag beetles and nightingales, amongst other benefiting wildlife, are some of the most threatened species in the UK, so having wilder, natural woodlands which contain these habitats are critical for their continued survival.

Yet as we are now seeing the impacts of a changing climate, our woodlands are receiving increased interest in another of their magical properties – the ability to take carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and lock it away for centuries in their branches, their roots and within the soil. As a result, trees have increasingly been put forward as a win-win solution for nature and the climate but are trees always a silver bullet?

Mike Read, Nature Picture Library



Fallen trees can provide an essential habitat for beetles

Neil Aldridge

## Heroic habitats

While important, trees are not the only answer to solving the climate crisis. Habitats such as chalk downland, hay meadows, peatlands and heathland all have extraordinary value for wildlife and will play a large role in addressing the climate crisis too. Yet, in the drive to plant more trees, it is precisely these habitats that can be put at risk.

In fact, planting trees on the above habitats often does more harm than good. Trees planted on habitats such as our flower-filled meadows, most of which have already vanished in the past century due to increased agricultural intensification, can lead to a loss of wildlife and further threaten the precious remnants that remain. Yet this bias for trees exists, as evidenced in a recent decision to replant an area of degraded heathland with conifers rather than restore it to its natural state.

Shallow peat soil is particularly at risk from tree planting and creating new woodlands in these areas can release more CO<sub>2</sub> than the trees end up taking in through soil degradation. Multiple examples of this were seen in the mid-20th century, when vast areas of peatland were drained, ploughed and assailed with single-species plantations of non-native conifers in a short-sighted bid to increase timber resources.

## Right tree, right place

This approach to planting trees has been rightly castigated by the majority of environmentalists and foresters alike, yet we are still seeing examples of this happening today in the increased drive to plant trees to address the climate crisis. In just one example from last year, 100 acres of bog, heath and grassland were destroyed to plant trees. So what's

the answer? Have we learnt from the mistakes of the past?

We know that trees are not just carbon-capturing machines. They are part of a living, breathing ecosystem. When creating new woodlands, it has to be the right tree in the right place, working with the environment around it. By ensuring that the right tree is planted in the right place, large areas of new, highly biodiverse, native woodland can be created as part of a joined-up system which benefits other habitats for nature, whilst drawing down carbon at the same time.

## Wilder woodlands

Of course, one way to get around the issue of where to plant trees is to let trees plant themselves. After all, planting trees does not create a woodland. Forests are diverse and dynamic environments which have



Many birds, like pied flycatchers, depend on diverse, native woodlands

Mark Hamblin, 2020VISION



Jays play a vital role in natural regeneration, carrying away acorns and caching them in the ground

Mark Hamblin, 2020VISION

developed over years, decades and millennia. Their complex ecological networks are both above ground and within the soils, involving a huge array of interdependent relationships between many species. These systems were operating long before the development of wooden stakes and plastic tree guards.

Natural regeneration is the best way of creating new, natural, and wilder woodlands for wildlife. This is particularly powerful when expanding ancient semi-natural woodland, as it allows the expansion of the entire woodland ecosystem, where new saplings can take advantage of symbiotic relationships with networks of fungi in the soil. With time and patience, this can result in stunning woodlands for wildlife, such as Brampton Wood in Cambridgeshire.

Not only is it more cost effective than planting, but natural regeneration is

also the best way of creating woodlands that are resilient to a changing climate. It allows these habitats to develop a dynamic age-structure, genetic variation, and associated ecologies, where trees that grow to maturity will be best suited to their local micro-climatic conditions, such as soil type, water availability and sunlight. All of this makes them more resilient to external pest and disease threats.

## A nuanced approach

Now natural regeneration won't be possible everywhere and in some locations it will need a great deal of support to get going. It is clear that expanding the UK's network of native tree and woodland cover will have a huge role to play in rebuilding ecological networks, delivering nature's recovery and tackling the climate crisis. If we are to increase woodland cover in this



## Branching out

- If you are considering planting a tree in your own garden or pursuing a small woodland creation project, check out our guide to tree planting at [wildlifetrusts.org/plant-a-tree](https://wildlifetrusts.org/plant-a-tree)
- If you're considering a larger woodland creation project, then check out our guidance on suitable sites for tree planting at [wtru.st/tree-chart](https://wtru.st/tree-chart)
- You can also get in touch with your nearest Wildlife Trust who can help with any specific queries you may have when considering how best to go about a new tree planting project.



Mark Hamblin, 2020VISION

country significantly then we will need to look at planting more trees.

But we must not forget about the other habitats across the UK. Restoring the UK's peatlands will be critical to meeting our climate ambitions, and the protection and restoration of our other threatened habitats are crucial if we are to bend the curve on biodiversity loss. A nuanced approach is required, one which creates more, bigger, better and more joined-up woodlands, hedgerows, trees and scrub thriving with wildlife and accessible to people, while also ensuring protection of other vital habitats where tree planting may be more damaging than helpful.



**Barnaby Coupe** is the Land Use Policy Manger at The Wildlife Trusts and leads on the development of tree and woodland policy.

# Wild notebook



Mustn't forget

- Five things to photograph:
- Mature oak catkins.
  - Insects sunning on a tree trunk.
  - Salt-loving plants growing along a main road (with care).
  - Mute swans with cygnets.
  - A flower-rich bank.
- Five things to do:
- Visit a river and look for mayflies.
  - Look closely at a bee on a flower to see if it is collecting pollen or feeding on nectar.
  - Watch an aphid colony.
  - Go on a garden slug safari after rain.
  - Spot the difference between pin-eyed and thrum-eyed primrose and cowslip flowers.

All photographs by Rosemary Winnall

★ STAR SPECIES



Seen a broad-bodied chaser? Take a pic and let us know via our short wildlife sightings form [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings)

### Broad-bodied chaser *Libellula depressa*

These attractive males flying in the sunshine and showing their pruinose blue abdomens are a delight to behold. They are territorial and often return to the same perch after flights to catch insects on the wing, to search for brown-bodied females or to attack other dragonflies in their airspace. Flying between April and September, they mate on the wing and the female lays her eggs by dipping her abdomen in the water. The hairy larvae live in the pond silt for one to three years feeding on pond invertebrates.

### Buff arches *Habrosyne pyritoides*

I never fail to admire the exquisite patterning on this beautiful moth. The pale areas at the base of the wings look as if the scales have rubbed off and give it a 3D look. The caterpillars feed on bramble and although widespread, abundance has declined steeply since 1970.



### Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Looking out of our window recently I noticed a moorhen bobbing across our garden pond. It climbed out onto the patio and came to feed on bird seed, showing off its large green/yellow paddle feet that it later used to climb up into the holly tree for a snooze.



### Beech flowers *Fagus sylvatica*

Wandering through the springtime woodland I pause to look carefully at a cluster of beech flowers. The stamens are dying down, having released their pollen for the breeze to waft away. The female flower, with its style protruding, is ready to receive pollen from another tree, thus ensuring cross pollination.



### Eggs of green dock beetle *Gastrophysa viridula*

Dock leaves are common enough but how often do we look at their undersides? There we might see rafts of bright yellow eggs. In this clump a fly has laid a white egg and the beetle eggs and young may soon be food for a *Parasyrphus nigratarsus* hoverfly larva.



### White-legged millipedes *Tachypodoiulus niger*

On a shaded log I spot a pair of courting millipedes and there seems to be a lot of tickling going on! Feeding on decaying vegetation they are great recyclers so are welcomed in the garden. They produce a chemical to deter predators but surprisingly hedgehogs love to eat them.

### Ivy-leaved toadflax *Cymbalaria muralis*

How do these plants grow so vigorously out of brick walls? Originally introduced from Italy in the 17th century, they can even spread up the wall as stems with seedpods grow upwards and away from the light (the opposite of when flowering), enabling some seeds to fall into cracks above.



### Yellow may *Heptagenia sulphurea*

This dun (between nymph and adult stages) has only recently emerged from the river. Soon her skin will split and she'll emerge as an adult (spinner). When the males swarm she'll mate, then fly upstream to lay eggs, dipping her abdomen under the water surface. Then she'll die just a few hours after emergence.



### Rosemary Winnall

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

# Working for wildlife

Hugh Clark



Doing some work? Converting the loft? Renovating a barn?

Having an extension? Other ecological works? Get in touch to see how, together, we can help wildlife [www.worcestershirowildlifeconsultancy.org/](http://www.worcestershirowildlifeconsultancy.org/)



**It is 3 am and the morning twilight is barely breaking through. We are all assembled around a barn that's nestled**

**deep within the Worcestershire countryside. Despite the promise of a warm summers' day ahead it is surprisingly chilly as we wait silently, alert for the bats to return from a busy night of foraging.**

As the long days of midsummer approach, the late nights and early mornings of wildlife surveys are not for everyone. I have been involved with monitoring for 24 years so am used to and accepting of this strange lifestyle.

My love for wildlife and passion for protected species such as bats, great crested newts, invertebrates etc. are ingrained in me. I've been with Worcestershire Wildlife Consultancy for 14 years but had the great privilege to take on its management in 2021. What a great opportunity to take forward our work for ambitious plans and projects to help even more of Worcestershire's wildlife. Since 1988, we've been the trading arm of Worcestershire Wildlife Trust – the Consultancy's independent ecological service not only helps wildlife through the planning and development system but all profits made go directly to the Trust to help with nature conservation across the county.

Back to the bats. Poised with



Tom Marshall



Tom Marshall

Tom Marshall

necessary equipment, including our trusty bat monitors, there is a strange silence all around – then deer start calling in the nearby woods and pigeons are beginning to awake with their calming, cooing sounds. There is rustling in the long dew-soaked grass behind me but I know to keep focused on the sky above. The bats should be returning about now, fed and contented as they return to their roosts within the old barn that has seen better days but has stood the test of time.

Jess and Becca, my Consultancy colleagues, are here with me and are spaced at strategic points around the barn. With walky-talkies in hand, we are on high alert and ready to message each other with the first sighting.

Then the softest of flutters. Quietly and swiftly a bat appears from the east – a brown long-eared. It is simply not enough to count them. It is vitally important that different species are recognised correctly and accurate information is obtained. This is where the bat monitors assist; the different sounds help us to identify each species (as well as our experienced eye, of course). She/he elegantly dives through the gap under the eaves without the slightest falter.

The outstanding agility, judgement and speed that bats possess never ceases to amaze me but there's no time to ponder on this spectacle. Becca and Jess have also spotted bats arriving and

swiftly disappearing into the nooks and crannies they are monitoring. We inform each other quietly and respectfully so as not to upset our bats – after all, we are the intruders here.

Then, as on nearly every other occasion, they appear *en masse*. This is where experience, calmness, judgement and being eagle-eyed matters, not to mention the ability to accurately record our flying friends. We need to be as swift as they are, which is not easy for most but I'm proud to say that we work as an excellent team and I know that yet another bat surveying session will prove to be successful.

As the bats have now all virtually returned home, I glance away for just a second and observe the red glow peeking above the brow on the hill in the distance. Call it instinct but I can't help but ponder, with all the years I've been doing this, how suddenly colder it goes just before sunrise.

The last dwindlers swoop into their beds and we wait a while longer to ensure they have all returned. The session has ended.

The team and I have a discussion as we sanitise our equipment; safety and hygiene is of paramount importance. As we drive away, I can't help but take one look back at the old barn. I know that it will be restored or developed but I feel satisfied that, with our recommendations, these little creatures will be protected and rehoused with

specifically designed nesting boxes. Once more, our team have encouraged another homeowner or developer to respect and live with nature.

On the way home I observe a fox jumping through a hedge and rabbits who have no road sense as they command their right of way. I see a buzzard up on the telegraph pole warming its feathers for a day's hunting ahead and note a barn owl returning from its adventure. But what of my day ahead? Well, it's home to a mug of tea. There are no thoughts of putting my head down yet – I sit down at my computer and begin the report of that morning's survey.

It's another busy day for the whole team, in fact, as we continue with our reports and chat to clients – prospective and longstanding – as we pride ourselves on considerate and professional client relationships. Every project is different, no matter the scale.

Then, as evening appears, we are onto our next survey – it all begins again.



**Joshua Evans**, WWC Manager. Loves all aspects of wildlife since being a child and looks for win-win situations for people and wildlife.



# Spring wildlife gardening

**Our gardens come alive in spring. Ponds fill with mating amphibians, borders buzz with the season's first bees and everywhere else, from trees and hedges to fences and roof panels, birds are busy singing to defend territories, mating or feeding young. It's an exciting time of year.**

While all of this goes on around us, there are things we can do to make our gardens even better for wildlife.

First, take a look at your borders – in early spring they should be carpeted with flowers such as spring-flowering hellebores, lungwort, primroses and other primulas and bulbs like crocus and snake's-head fritillary. Later grape hyacinths, alliums, cranesbills, bugle and cuckooflower take centre stage. The early flowers are the most important as they provide food for pollinators emerging from hibernation – remember

that daffodils and tulips are usually ignored by bees. Make a note of which flowers you have and fill gaps with pollinator favourites.

Ponds are full of mating amphibians and invertebrates, so are best left alone now. However, it's important to check that wildlife can enter and exit your pond safely – add a log or large stone to help wildlife access the water safely. If you don't have many plants in the pond you can add more now, as long as you don't disturb the water too much. Aim for a mix of floating, submerged and deep-water plants, with around two-thirds of the surface of the pond covered. Plants absorb nitrates from the water and therefore inhibit the growth of algae. They also provide hiding places for tadpoles and other larvae from predators such as diving beetles and



dragonfly nymphs. Choose native marginals such as brooklime and water forget-me-not, floating plants such as frogbit and oxygenators like hornwort and water crowfoot.

Around the pond, think ahead to summer, when froglets and toadlets may be exiting the water for the first time. Let the grass there grow long and grow plants to protect them from predators. Cranesbill geraniums and birds' foot trefoil work well around ponds, providing plenty of shelter for amphibians big and small.

If you have a meadow then cut it back in early spring and remove clippings, then let it grow until autumn. As well as providing wildflowers for pollinators, the long grass will provide foodplants for caterpillars and shelter for beetles and other invertebrates, plus amphibians, small mammals and even hedgehogs.



Sarah Cuttle

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

Get more wildlife-friendly gardening tips at [wildlifetrusts.org/gardening](http://wildlifetrusts.org/gardening)



Hannah Bailey



# Seas of surprise

Sophie Pavelle

As I write, it's a moody, overcast Tuesday afternoon. Desk days like these make me crave the sea. I want to be fully in it, head and all, with (ideally) the sun streaking through. I'm lucky enough to have boomeranged home to Devon after university and the southwest coast has lodged itself deep in my heart. I think of the sea daily, envisaging myself on, in or indeed under it... if possible.

One of my favourite things about British coastlines is that they are never the same. The rhythm of the tide brings new sights, smells, colours and characters to our shorelines four times a day. Give me a spare spring hour and you may find me walking barefoot along the local beach, looking for snakelocks anemones at low tide. Aside from their striking green and purple colour, I love how it takes barely any water for them to sway their thick tentacles like hula skirts, dancing in their rockpools like a couple of TikTokers.

On this same beach, a colony of breeding kittiwakes nest on the sandstone cliff face, coming home after a challenging winter in the Atlantic. As one of our most endangered seabirds, seeing them so free as they wheel with

abandon about the clifftops, diving for food to feed their growing chicks, is a sight to raise even the gloomiest spirits.

But for me, nothing quite compares to the sighting of a fellow mammal in the water. Last summer, I had a particularly memorable encounter with a grey seal – the larger of our two native species. I was paddleboarding on a calm April afternoon, when the water had this glassy appeal. Paddling in random circles and enjoying the rare absence of swell on this particular stretch of coast, I adopted a downwards gaze, unsure what I was really looking for. But then, there he was. About 10 feet away from me – an enormous bull grey seal. He was bottling as seals do, with only his (gigantic) head above the water. Whiskers twitching, eyes watching. I stopped breathing, just in case. And then as quickly as he had surfaced, he disappeared below the waves. Off on some covert assignment, no doubt.

Rather incredibly, the UK is home to 40 per cent of the world population of grey seals. Perhaps they enjoy the variety of the coast as much as I do? I think of that moment often and look forward to being surprised yet again by the beauty of the British seas this spring.



## OCEAN UPDATES

Discover more about our seas by signing up for our marine mailing! You'll get an exclusive monthly newsletter packed with marine conservation news from around the world, exciting wildlife sightings from our amazing UK seas and updates on the latest developments in protecting our oceans.

[wildlifetrusts.org/marine-mailing](http://wildlifetrusts.org/marine-mailing)

Find inspiration to get outdoors and discover your own spring surprises with our selection of seasonal spectacles! [wildlifetrusts.org/spring-wildlife](http://wildlifetrusts.org/spring-wildlife)

**Sophie Pavelle** is a science communicator and ambassador for The Wildlife Trusts. Her first book *Forget Me Not, Finding the Forgotten Species of Climate Change Britain* is published 9 June 2022 (Bloomsbury).

[@sophiepavs](https://twitter.com/sophiepavs)

# Your letters

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

## Not an icicle

Can you tell me what this glutinous object is, hanging from my spindle tree? Many small, almost spherical, objects are suspended within it.

Dave Willetts

*Ed: These are caddis eggs, probably *Glyptotaelius pellucidus*, which are laid in summer on leaves overhanging water – they'll hatch and drop into the water beneath. Gravity and rain result in the jelly becoming more pendulous as the season progresses, which presumably allows the tiny larvae to emerge more easily.*



David Willetts

## Swimming squirrel

On a recent walk by the River Severn we were looking down over the river when we heard a loud splash. To our surprise it was a grey squirrel. It swam right across the river and straight up into a tree. I worried that we had scared it but three weeks later, I saw another squirrel do exactly the same. I wonder how many other readers have seen this behaviour?

John Blakiston



John Blakiston

## Large fungus

This sits on the ground with no stem although there are smaller ones with very short stems. It's about 10" by 11". My daughter-in-law thinks it could be a brown roll-rim as I have a birch tree nearby.

Ruth Kirwan

*Ed: Brown roll-rims *Paxillus involutus* have a rolled rim when young and if the gills are pressed by fingers, they should squash easily. They usually have a short dumpy stem, probably hidden by the stones. Its size, however, suggests that it might be the closely related and scarcer fungus *Paxillus obscurisporus*.*



Ruth Kirwan

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## Social feeds

New Year's Day at Upton Warren

[Steve Weaver](#)



Steve Weaver

Wow! Look who visited my garden today.

[Georgina Pickett](#)



Georgina Pickett

Amazing to see this stunning creature on the Severn today. First time I've seen one in the wild

[@nphallett41](#)



Nigel Hallett



# The future of Worcestershire's Wildlife is in Your Hands

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust relies on the generosity of our wonderful supporters for vital support. For some, the best way to support us is to leave a gift in a Will.

These gifts have never been more important to us. Important funds for our conservation work come from people like you who decide to leave a lasting legacy to wildlife in Worcestershire, which has brought so much joy in their lifetime. It really doesn't matter how much you give – we are grateful for all gifts, large or small.

During our first 50 years, legacies from supporters like you have made a huge difference to our work. With your help, we can expand our work across the county for our next 50 years.

To find out more contact Mike on

**01905 754919**

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