

Worcestershire **WILDLIFE**



Worcestershire
Wildlife Trust



Welcome



Over the spring we have been able to gradually resume our face-to-face activities and events, most recently a thank you event at Lower Smite Farm for longstanding members and our annual Volunteers

Conference – in both cases the first since 2019.

These events provide opportunities to renew old acquaintances and to make new ones. They also highlight the importance to the Trust's work of the support of members and volunteers alike, throughout our activities, which has been so important over the last two years. Indeed, our members and volunteers, alongside our staff and trustees who have worked tirelessly, have enabled us to weather the storms of the last two years, so I want to say a huge thank you for that support.

Chatting with people face-to-face has also confirmed that many of us have had time to reflect on various aspects of our lives and many people have commented just how important nature has been to them. Perhaps unsurprisingly we recently have experienced a significant increase in legacy pledges. Legacies are crucial to the future of wildlife in Worcestershire, and when received they are designated to a specific fund that is used for special projects such as land purchase, major projects and new initiatives. Wherever possible we match legacies with grant funding from other sources so that the overall impact can be several times the value of the original legacy. Please contact us if you would like to know more.

Colin Raven

Colin Raven, Director



Wendy Carter



Wendy Carter

Guy Edwardes, 2020VISION

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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: Ben Hall, 2020VISION



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

Donate From purchasing land to protecting wildlife, exciting projects near you need your support.
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

Local groups Join one of our eight local groups to help make a difference and meet like-minded people.
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

Shop Check our online shop for cards, calendars and gifts – all proceeds help our work.
worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/shop



Thanks to you
We're creating the largest block of heathland in Worcestershire

Our wild Heathland

It (2018) seems like a long time ago when we began to look at the possibilities of creating the largest block of heathland in Worcestershire, an area of over 640 acres managed for wildlife.

In the UK, more than 80% of lowland heathland has been lost over the past 200 years; we've lost around 90% in Worcestershire. In losing so much of this wonderful habitat, we've also lost the wildlife that depends on it. Dropping Well Farm, a 100-acre piece of land at the heart of surrounding heathland between Kidderminster, Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn, had been an area that we'd dreamed of acquiring for a long time. Surrounded by our Devil's Spittleful and Blackstone Farm Fields nature reserves alongside Wyre Forest

District Council's nature reserves of the Rifle Range, Burlish Top and Burlish Meadows, this block of land is crucial if we are to create a connected landscape to help nature to recover.

Could we do it? Working with Clive Chatters, a heathland specialist, we explored ideas to revert the land to heathland. With a restoration plan produced, we committed to trying to buy and restore the land at Dropping Well Farm.

We are indebted to Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's loan scheme and thankful to the previous owners, both of whom gave us time to fundraise for the £1.3 million project. We are grateful for the fantastic support from Severn Waste Services through a £100,000 grant. With huge thanks to you – our valued

members – by autumn 2020 we had received the most funds we had ever raised from a fundraising appeal. With support from a number of charitable trusts and foundations, the National Lottery Heritage Fund matched our fundraising. With funds ringfenced from a legacy from David Glaze, we were able to begin the project. We finally completed the purchase of land at Dropping Well Farm in November 2021. We had done it!



Mike Perry, WWT Head of Resources. Mike enjoys exploring wildlife with his wife and two young sons.



Wendy Carter



Paul Lane

Restoring heathland is not an overnight job and we have experience of this long-term journey at neighbouring Blackstone Farm Fields nature reserve.

Our perception of heathland is a wall-to-wall sea of purple heather with, perhaps, some splashes of yellow gorse and broom. Heathland is so much more than this. We have learnt from our management of The Devil's Spittleful over many years that dynamic

habitats are just as important as more stable grassy heathland. In recent years we have invested in achieving a predominantly open landscape of grazed heather over acid-loving grasses, intermixed with bare ground (permanent and temporary), scrub bushes and woodland. We try to ensure a mix of ages and varieties to provide the changing conditions required by heathland wildlife.

From poppies to grazing

Heathland is a low-nutrient environment so one of our first jobs at Dropping Well Farm is to lower the nutrient level. Many of you may remember when we first did this at Blackstone Farm Fields where, in order to bury nutrients near the top of the soil, we deep ploughed the land. This resulted in a spectacular display of poppies whose seeds had been lying dormant in the soil. Gradually, other species joined the poppies and as the ploughing ceased, the poppies no longer sprang up in such numbers. Although we're not deep ploughing at Dropping Well Farm, a similar bloom of poppies occurred when we took over the management. As with Blackstone Farm Fields, this is just one phase of the restoration to heathland.

For the immediate future we'll continue to have a crop at Dropping Well Farm but this isn't a conventional crop with input of fertilisers or pesticides. Over the past year, for example, we have begun to sow bird food seed mixes and have also introduced supplementary



Wendy Carter

bird feeding. It was delightful to see flocks of finches responding to this over the winter months.

If you have been to the area recently you will have seen that we have installed fencing that will enable us to graze the site. Grazing will help to keep vigorous and competitive vegetation in check, allowing more delicate plants to thrive. We reintroduced grazing at Blackstone Farm Fields after many years of arable crops and know that a long period of transition to a heathery heath lie ahead of us.

Reluctant colonisers

In contrast to the persistence and mobility of species of arable and fallow habitats, our experience at Blackstone Farm Fields indicates the relative immobility of perennial heathland species, notably the herbs, grasses and dwarf shrubs of the heath. The experience is that these species do not arrive of their own accord. Heathland restoration schemes elsewhere in England indicate that such species either become established in the early years of restoration or,

if not, may take many decades to colonise into a closed sward.

Dropping Well Farm and Blackstone Farm Fields are in the immediate vicinity of high-quality heathlands. What is lacking is the means by which less-mobile species may colonise from the mature heath into our restoration schemes. The experience at Blackstone, and numerous other restoration schemes of fragmented heaths, is that if we wish to establish heathery heathland on former farmland then we will need to assist colonisation.

Networks for people

As well as enabling grazing, the fencing is also being put in place to introduce a new circular nature trail that will hopefully open in spring 2023. Just like we're connecting habitat for wildlife, the trail will provide a network of paths for visitors to enjoy this wonderful place.

Earlier this year our five-year project to engage local communities, particularly those bordering the site, got underway and Beccy Somers joined us to lead this work. We have

begun working with local schools and local organisations to help people understand, celebrate and restore this wonderful site for nature. We have been overwhelmed with the support and interest in the project from the people we have spoken to. As always with our work, volunteers will play a vital role ranging from practical conservation to public engagement, historical research and much more.

Over time you will see the land change. We do not know exactly how and when it will change and are looking forward to a dynamic mix of habitats as we travel our restoration road. We hope you enjoy the journey with us and we would like to sincerely thank everyone who supported this project through joining as members, volunteering and donating. Without your support, this would not be possible.



Helen Woodman, WWT Head of Conservation. Helen loves the smells, sounds and beauty of our wild places.



Wendy Carter

DID YOU KNOW?

The **black-headed velvet ant** (left), which occurs on The Devil's Spittleful, is **not an ant** at all. The females of these small (4-5mm) parasitic wasps hunt for nests of ground-nesting bees and wasps in which to lay their eggs.

Males are winged and can sometimes be seen flying over bare ground in large numbers, looking for a female.

Burlish Meadows: a case study

Just over the hill from Dropping Well Farm is Wyre Forest District Council's Burlish Meadows. We asked our heathland ambassador, Brett Westwood, to take a closer look.

The conversion of farmland to heathland and acid grassland at Dropping Well Farm and Burlish Top is a huge boost to Worcestershire's wildlife but there are other marvels on site.

Sandwiched between the old golf course and the Stourport to Kidderminster road is Burlish Meadows; not perhaps your vision of a typical nature reserve. Its collection of mounds and hollows may look like a brownfield 'wasteland' but this area is wonderfully rich in plant and insect life and it is now a vital ingredient in the recipe for restoration here.

A few years ago, the site looked very different. An abandoned landscaping project next to the golf course had created huge bunds of bare earth and landfill where old fridge freezers and a burnt-out road-sweeper were left to decay. Wyre Forest District Council, the site owners, invited Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's and Worcestershire County Council's Natural Networks team to advise them how to manage the open mosaic habitat. The Trust's ecologists saw the potential in the bare ground with low nutrient levels, dips, slopes and shallow pools that combined to create a unique suite of habitats. The Trust recommended to the District Council that, after clearing the site of unsafe rubbish, it managed this brownfield habitat for wildlife. Grant funding was also made towards fencing the adjoining golf course fairways to enable conservation grazing, periodic creation of bare ground at Burlish Meadows and the removal of hundreds of goldfish from the pond.

Just three years on, the results are impressive. Sweeps of clover and bird's-foot trefoil enliven the flatter areas, attracting marbled white and other butterflies. Whitethroats chatter from

the scrubber mounds and kestrels hover overhead. The pool and shallow ruts have breeding dragonflies and damselflies, common toads and smooth newts. The bunds have erupted in a riot of wild and garden plants, magnets for pollinators. Particularly exciting is the value of Burlish Meadows as a stepping stone for scarce species such as the brown-banded carder bumblebee that occurs at Blackstone Farm Fields and across the River Stour at Wilden Marsh; the nectar sources at Burlish Meadows have given it a 'bridge' to connect its colonies. Annual plants such as common cudweed and hare's-foot clover, both lovers of disturbed sandy ground, also thrive here and their populations will boost those on Burlish Top and beyond.

Management of this dynamic habitat will be an exciting challenge and will ensure its important role in the future of north Worcestershire heaths.



Brett Westwood, WWT member & heathland ambassador. A keen naturalist with a lifelong love of all things heathland.

Find out more:
www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/blog/heathland-heroes
www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/natural-networks



Wendy Carter

Amazing ants

Words: **Rosemary Winnall**
 Photo: **Jon Hawkins, Surrey Hills Photography**

It's a warm day and several black garden ants are sipping nectar from buds on our *Centaurea montana*. I walk down to the woodland to a nest of jet ants, where I watch the workers with their heart-shaped heads climbing the oak trunk to the leafy canopy to feed on aphid honeydew. Swollen-bodied descending ants mark the trail with scent as they make their way back to their nest inside an old tree stump. Along the lane I spot greater celandine with ripe fruits, each seed with an appendage rich in lipids and proteins that ants like to feed to their young. I drop a few seeds and before long I see red ants collect them and return along the hedgerow to their nest under a stone. This is how ants spread plants.

There are about 12,500 ant species in the world but only 50 in the UK.

Nests contain one or several queens and many wingless non-reproducing female workers. Winged males emerge in summer, ready for mating flights with new queens.

Ant larvae are tended by nurse ants who guard, feed, clean and move them as well as help them when they moult.

Ants communicate with complex chemical signals and tactile stimulation through their antennae.

Many species collect dead or live invertebrates to feed to their young and often help each other to bring these back to the nest.

Yellow meadow ants create mounds in sunny unimproved meadows, each nest with up to 10,000 ants. They live underground, feeding on honeydew produced by grass root aphids.

The southern wood ant can build huge nests, often 2m wide and 1m high. There are between 100,000 and 400,000 ants per nest and several queens.

Many different insects are associated with ants including beetles and butterflies. A tiny white blind woodlouse *Platyarthrus hoffmannseggii* lives only in ant nests, scavenging in the tunnels.



Local news



Peter Cairns, 2020VISION

Bringing nature to you

We are thrilled to be part of Nextdoor Nature, a new natural legacy to mark the Queen's Jubilee.

In March, the National Lottery Heritage Fund announced a £5 million investment in a ground-breaking initiative to create community-led projects to bring wildlife back where people live across the UK.

The Trust will work alongside communities in parts of Bromsgrove and Redditch where there is limited access to nature and will also work alongside young people across Worcestershire, inspiring community action where they live.

Our Director, Colin Raven, said: 'We know from experience that people

want to take action to improve their neighbourhoods for wildlife but often it's hard to know where to start. Nextdoor Nature will let communities set their own agenda about how they want to improve their local area for wildlife and we'll be looking at different ways of bringing people together and giving them support, skills and confidence to take the next step.'

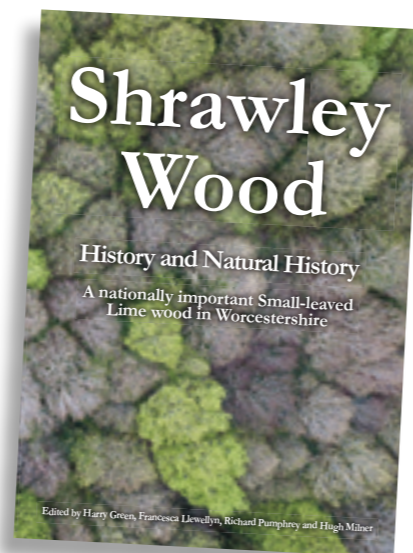
The project will begin this summer. Keep your eye on our website, e-newsletters and social media for further news.



Shrawley Wood

A new book charting the history and natural history of Shrawley Wood has been published. Unusual because of the domination of small-leaved lime in this ancient wood, Shrawley is a jewel in Worcestershire's woodland crown. This lavishly illustrated 600-page book has brought together in-depth research from historians, naturalists, archaeologists and foresters. It is a must-have for anyone interested in the history, flora and fauna of our woodlands.

Trust members are being offered the book at a discounted price of £60 plus £6 postage and packing. If you'd like to buy a copy, please email worcestershire.recorders@gmail.com for details of how to pay.



Events

From guided walks to indoor talks, take a look at the What's On pages of our website to discover activities taking place near you.

Our AGM will take place on Wednesday 12th October.

www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on



Martyn Crookston

We bet you didn't know

Swifts do almost everything on the wing and can catch up to 20,000 insects a day. Make a note to watch and listen to them before they head back to Africa.

Find out more www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/blog/seasonal-spot/saving-our-high-fliers



Karina Martin, 2020VISION

Dog walkers to lead the way

We've been encouraging dog walkers to keep pooches on leads for the sake of breeding birds and other wildlife. Walking with our faithful companion is good for our health and theirs but dogs off leads, on our nature reserves and in the wider countryside, is becoming an increasing problem for wildlife. Our inquisitive furry friends usually mean no harm but wildlife sees them (and us) as predators, which can lead to birds

abandoning nests and chicks and other wildlife, such as adders, harvest mice and brown hares being significantly disturbed. This isn't just a problem in breeding season; during winter hibernating dormice can be disturbed and birds like woodcock, which roost on the ground, can use all-important energy to flee wandering dogs.

www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/news/dog-walkers-must-lead-way

Come and say hello

We are excited to be welcoming you back to Lower Smite Farm so that we can say thank you for your support!

On Wednesday 10 August, we would be delighted if you can join us for some tea and cake at any time from 10am until 3pm – you can stay as long as you want or just pop in to say hello. There will be members of staff around to talk to and the farm

trail will be available if you want to go for a self-guided walk. You will be able to meet Joanna and Anne, your membership team.

You don't need to let us know you'll be coming but if you know you are, letting us know will help with making sure we have enough cake. You can email membership@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org

Going electric!

As our fleet vehicles become redundant, we're going electric. We're currently replacing one of our old diesel vans with a new electric model so look out for us as we travel between our nature reserves. In the UK, the total carbon emissions (including construction and use) from a battery electric car is roughly a third of that from a comparable fossil-fuel car and this is reducing each year as the electricity grid is decarbonised. It's still better to walk, cycle or take the bus and train wherever possible, though.

Mapping to help nature's recovery

In June we began a three year Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund that is enabling us to work with farmers and foresters in three core areas – Forest of Feckenham, Malvern Chase and parts of west Worcestershire. Building on existing relationships, we will highlight priority targets and training that are required to create functioning wildlife networks between land holdings. These might include hedgerow corridors (dormouse, brown hairstreak) or watercourse corridors (water vole) and a hay exchange project will promote grassland restoration/creation by matching hay from donor to receptor meadows.

Digital magazine

If you'd like to try our magazine in a digital format, it's available as a pdf from our website www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/magazineJul22. If you'd prefer to receive it like this in future, you can sign up using the quick form on the page.





Chris Maguire

Wye to Wyre, connecting nature and people

Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Monmouthshire Wildlife Trusts have developed a cross border vision and programme of projects, Severn Treescapes, to deliver a connected and resilient nature recovery network and climate corridor from Wentwood Forest in Gwent, across the Wyre Valley Woodlands and Forest of Dean, to the Woolhope Dome, Malvern Hills, Teme Valley and Wyre Forest. An ancient woodland core lies

at the heart of this corridor but it is fragmented and threatened and the work will help in our work towards 30% of land and seas managed for the benefit of nature by 2030.

As a first step we have funding to employ an advisor for west Worcestershire who will be visiting landowners and managers to offer woodland management, creation and planting advice. We hope to have the advisor in post in November.



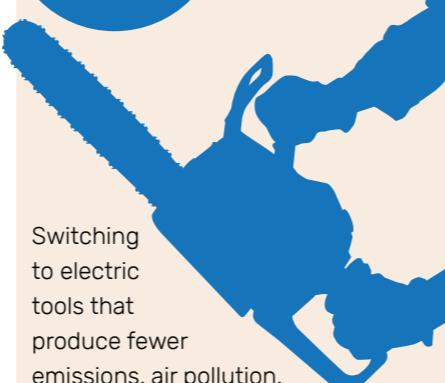
Green Farm appeal update

Thank you to everyone who has supported our appeal to purchase land at Green Farm, adjacent to our Monkwood nature reserve, that we featured in our spring magazine. This 59-acre site will extend Monkwood through magnificent meadows and wonderful woodland, and will benefit species such as the wood white


butterflies and dormice found at Monkwood.

For the latest news with how our appeal is progressing or to find out more, please visit www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/appeals/green-farm. If successful, we hope to complete the purchase of this land before the end of 2022.


Thank you! With your help we're going greener by:




Switching to electric tools that produce fewer emissions, air pollution, vibrations and noise.



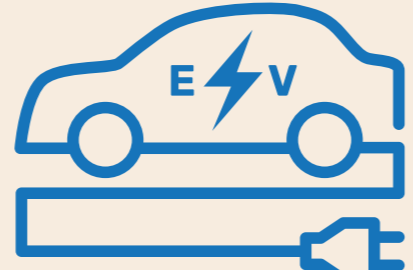
Installing a solar PV system on our barn roof to help power our offices, tools and electric vehicles.



Carefully planning where we can increase woodland cover without harming other precious habitats.



Switching to LED light bulbs that use c.90% less energy than incandescent ones and last 50 times longer.



Installing electric vehicle charge points so our staff can charge their cars while at work.

UK news

Full marks for new school subject

This April, the UK Government announced the introduction of a new GCSE in natural history. From 2025, secondary school students in England will have the opportunity to study the natural world, developing an in-depth knowledge of wildlife and wider ecosystems, as well as real-life experience of nature. The GCSE will teach transferable skills in observation, identification, classification and data gathering and how to apply this knowledge to real world issues. The announcement follows years of campaigning to make nature part of the curriculum, led by naturalist and writer Mary Colwell.

Providing young people with the knowledge to protect the planet is

essential for the future of the natural world, as is inspiring a connection to nature. The new natural history GCSE is a great first step but this journey needs to start sooner and involve all pupils in the UK, regardless of the subjects they study.

We want to see children given opportunities to spend at least an hour a day learning outside and for nature and climate education to be embedded across all subjects and at all levels. This message has been championed by thousands of young people through the Our Bright Future programme, who want greater opportunities to learn in, and about, nature.

Read our full response to the new GCSE at wtru.st/new-GCSE

Sky-high ambitions

Wild About Gardens, an annual joint initiative between The Wildlife Trusts and the Royal Horticultural Society, is setting its sights sky-high as we go wild about our high-flying birds. This year, the focus is on swifts, swallows and martins – summer visitors that have suffered some serious declines. Plummeting insect populations and

loss of nesting sites have contributed to swifts and house martins joining the UK's red list, marking them as birds in dire need of help. The campaign is calling on the public to help by nurturing insect-friendly gardens and adding nest boxes to homes.

Find out more at wildaboutgardens.org.uk



Nick Upton

UK highlights

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



1. Raptor real estate

A pair of peregrine falcons have nested for the first time on St Albans Cathedral, thanks to a nesting tray provided by the Wilder St Albans project – a collaboration between Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and St Albans City and District Council. The St Albans pair is one of only five pairs breeding in Hertfordshire.

wtru.st/st-albans-nest

2. Hope for hazel dormice

Surrey Wildlife Trust has trained more than 100 volunteers to help hedgerows flourish across Surrey's North Downs, giving hope to the iconic hazel dormice. Even small gaps in a hedgerow can be a barrier to dormice, isolating populations. The new volunteer task force is surveying, laying and planting hedgerows to help dormice populations expand.

wtru.st/dormice-hope

3. Scuttled cuttle

A rare pink cuttlefish was found on a Cornish beach, following late winter storms. This small species is more commonly seen in the Mediterranean, with only sporadic records from southern Britain. The discovery was made by Cornwall Wildlife Trust volunteers and recorded in the Trust's Marine Strandings Network.

wtru.st/pink-cuttlefish

Worcestershire's nature reserves

Worcestershire has almost one fifth of England's remaining flower-rich meadows and pastures. As the hay crops are cut and grazing animals arrive as the year winds on, it's good to contemplate some of our many grassland nature reserves, from the splendour of long-established places like Foster's Green Meadows National Nature Reserve to restoration projects like Nash's Meadows.

An old meadow can seem a timeless, unchanging spectacle, with the yearly return of our favourite species such as common spotted orchids and bird's-foot trefoil. Reserves being restored might see more dramatic changes with flushes of species appearing and dominating for a season or two, like stinging nettles on places where manure was stacked before being spread across the field as fertiliser. As the nutrients that fed into the soil gradually leach away, dominant competitive grasses establish, followed by parasitic plants such as yellow rattle or pioneering wildflowers such as oxeye daisy, spreading in dense patches until a more closed sward of finer grasses and delicate flowers develops.

Even long-established meadows are vulnerable to changes in nutrients from surrounding land, changing water tables, climate and

the disturbance and trampling from visitors straying off paths to get a closer look, unaware of how delicate these flowers can be.

Of course, there is more to meadows than just the flowers. Hedges and scrubby margins provide cover and breeding habitat for birds such as yellowhammers and invertebrates such as one of our success stories, the brown hairstreak. The long grass is perfect for slow-worms, grass snakes and abundant small mammals from bank voles to harvest mice. Nor should we overlook the soils! Long-established meadows can store carbon that has taken centuries to accumulate, while soils rich in humus and other organic matter can provide over-wintering safety for the invertebrates that feed on the summer flowers, like the fairy longhorn beetle. This oxeye daisy fan lays its eggs in the fungus-rich soil of fairy rings and the larvae pupate 5cm below the surface during the winter months before emerging as new adults.

Our job as the reserves team is to monitor the health of our meadows and associated species and provide the management to keep them in top or improving condition. We carefully time our hay cuts to allow plants to develop, sometimes taking seed before

following up with grazing, opening up the sward to allow new flowers to establish. As climate change extends the growing season into November and December, grazing is becoming more important to strip out nutrients and reduce competitive grasses.

Where possible we also try to expand our meadows, which is why we are pleased to be working with the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership. They have invested in a mechanical seed harvester that can collect small amounts of seed from some of our meadows to help create new flower-rich grasslands and make Worcestershire richer and more diverse.

We are also hoping to expand and protect our meadows with the purchase of Romsley Manor Meadows in the north of the county. Romsley is 13 hectares (32 acres) of mixed acidic grassland and spring-fed flushes, two thirds of which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest due to its exciting wildflowers and insects in the wetter areas. We took on management of these meadows in 2019 and have now begun fundraising to secure this wonderful place for wildlife. You can find out more about it at www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/appeals/romsley-meadows



we're managing 12.5 km² for nature's recovery



Lydia Rackham

Your nature reserves team



Paul Lane



Timescale for restoration of grasslands*

- Less than five years
- 5-10 years
- 10+ years

*Based on studies from seven European countries

New arrival

Taking on new sites brings additional demands and in April we welcomed Thomas Watkins as our new Central Reserves Officer. Thomas has taken on 12 sites including Trench and Chaddesley woods, Piper's Hill and Naunton Court Farm. Joining us from Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Thomas previously worked on landscape-scale recovery projects, including a dormouse reintroduction scheme.

Cuck-oo

This spring we welcomed back Calypso, a cuckoo caught in Worcestershire as part of a wider research project by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). The project fits satellite transmitters to these amazing birds to better understand their migration routes and the dangers they face as they travel between the UK and central Africa. Calypso wasn't ringed on our reserves, although another cuckoo (Harry) was. Sadly, Harry stopped transmitting

in Western Africa so has not joined Calypso on the return route. Two more Worcestershire cuckoos have been tagged and we look forward to bringing you more cuckoo news in future.

Woodland successes

We are celebrating 25 years of owning Grafton Wood this summer. Purchased with Butterfly Conservation in 1997, this wonderful reserve is home to an amazing range of flora and fauna, including over 40 species of birds, the rare Bechstein's bat and endangered brown hairstreak and wood white butterflies. The volunteer team has worked tirelessly over this quarter of a century to reinstate coppice plots and a network of woodland rides and glades. Forestry work continued to open up a new area last winter although, as with other of our woodlands, the warmer, wetter winters have made it difficult to extract timber at the time of cutting. Visitors to Grafton, Tiddesley and Trench woods will have noticed that we had a

particularly good show of bluebells in the worked areas.

Celebrations were also going on at Monkwood as we discovered our first harvest mouse nest as well as two sleepy dormice during the early part of the year. Our licenced surveyors were able to show the dormice to our trainees, which was a great experience for them although it does set the bar quite high as wildlife experiences go! The trainees have got stuck in with the practical work across our reserves and we hope they will forgive us if they don't encounter something better than a hibernating dormouse.

As always, a big thank you to our volunteers whose work is so essential in delivering our conservation management and helping the reserve officers in keeping an eye on our reserves across the county.



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



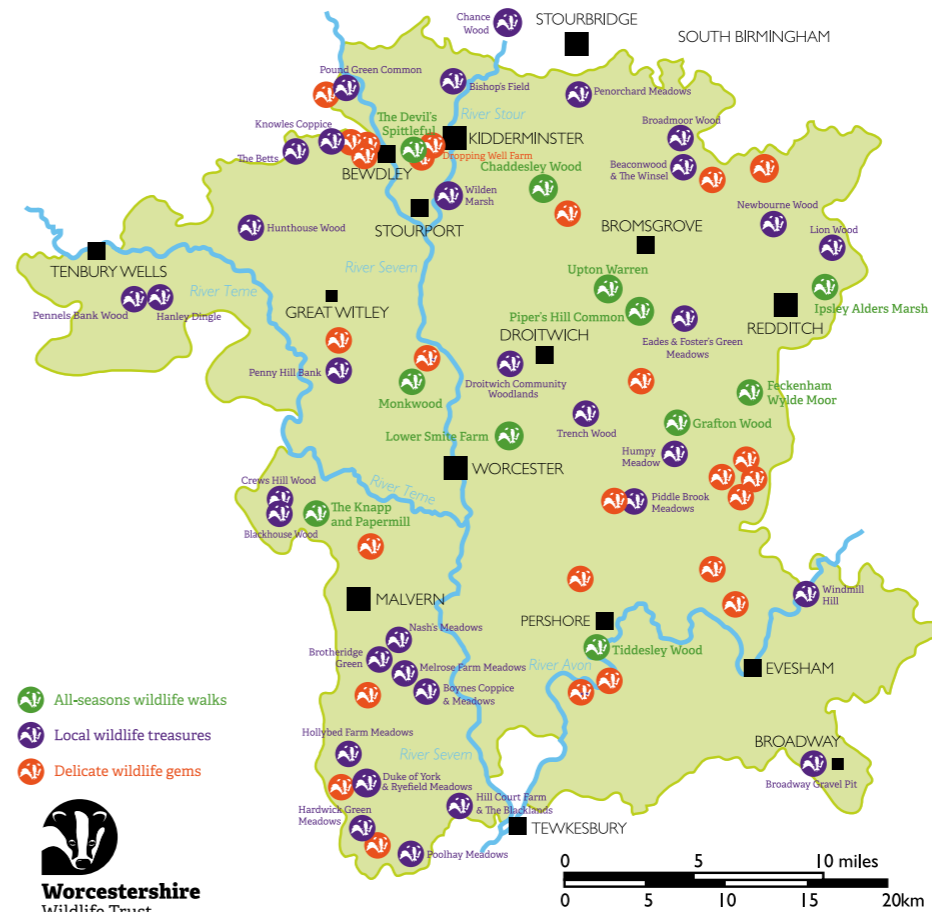
Did you know?

Dyer's greenweed was used for dying clothes in medieval times but it dyed them yellow, not green.



Fairy-ring longhorn beetles

Nick Packham



Worcestershire Wildlife Trust



Want to help record wildlife on our nature reserves? Get in touch volunteer@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org

HIGH FIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Photos by: Harry Green, Richard Clifford, Matthew Lissimore, Rob Jordan, Wendy Carter.



1. Dyer's Greenweed – in old hay meadows.
2. Wood white – along sunny woodland rides.
3. Common lizard – basking in the sunshine.
4. Merlin – hunting over open countryside.
5. Hedgehog – at dusk in gardens.

Worcestershire's super grasses

Grasses and grassy places are found everywhere from your local town park, roadside verges and farm fields to floodplains and wetlands to the top of the Malvern Hills. Around 20% of England's remaining species-rich grasslands and meadows are found in Worcestershire, supporting legions of wildlife and providing quality food for livestock.

Grasses are the largest family of flowering plants (angiosperms) in the UK with around 200 species. Identifying them can be difficult but it's easier when they're flowering in spring and summer. Check and compare flower heads (inflorescences) to see how the flowering parts are arranged – in a simple row up the central stem or in a branching panicle? There are a few here to get you

started but if you're keen to learn more, my advice is to get a hand lens, learn the plant part names and obtain a field guide with a botanical key.



Michael Liley, botanist. Our former Wildlife Sites Officer, still actively botanising, birding and species recording.



Paul Lane

Crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*

Growing in compact tufts, this rather stiff-looking grass has narrow leaves and upright flower spikes in a tightly packed cluster shaped like a bottlebrush. The flowers are on one side of the stem and persist during winter, helping with identification. A foodplant of skipper butterflies, it's a typical grass of old unimproved pastures and a key constituent of meadows on heavy soils, the kind of wildflower meadow you'll find across Worcestershire.



Paul Lane

Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*

This softly hairy, perennial grass grows in dense tufts up to one metre tall and can be seen throughout the year. It has a woolly appearance with flower heads tinged purple to red and soft seedheads of grey to pink. It often occurs in damp places or in association with rushes/sedges. When not in flower, look closely at the stem bases, which have the appearance of pink/purple-striped pyjamas.



Rosemary Winnall

False oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*

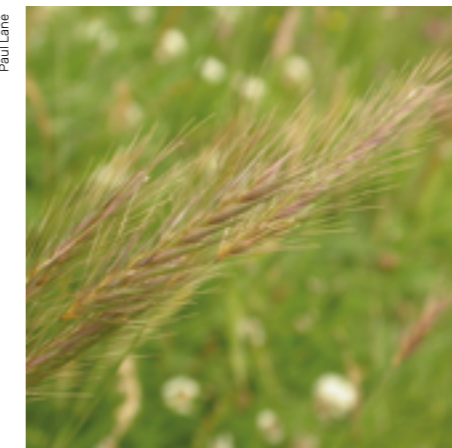
A large tufted, erect perennial grass that grows to one metre tall. The light green leaves are broad, lax and slightly hairy. The flower heads, 10-30cm long, are composed of bunches of silky spikelets with conspicuous angled-back bristles (awns). Found in a range of grasslands, including road verges and along riverbanks, this is a common grass. Prone to fungal rusts and shedding copious pollen, this is a major cause of my hay-fever!



Paul Lane

Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*

Look for distinctive branched flower heads with 'blobby' spikelets, stiff flower stems, one-sided panicles and bluish-green foliage. It forms characteristic tussocks and is common on embankments and field margins. As with many grasses, it's great for wildlife – foodplant for caterpillars, source of seeds for finches and pollen for insects. The tussocky bases provide nesting sites for bumblebees and the grass is favoured by harvest mice for nests.



Philip Precey

Meadow barley *Hordeum secalinum*

A graceful species that possesses distinctive flower heads of awned spikelets clustered in groups of three. It's a slowly declining species of floodplain meadows and coastal grazing marsh habitats, affected partly by conversions to arable and drainage schemes. Although on the north-western edge of its range, this attractive wild barley sways gently in the breeze in winter-flooded meadows along the Severn and Avon river catchments.



Wendy Carter

Quaking grass *Briza media*

Visually, a grass of almost poetic delicacy and charm; Wordsworth should have written about a drift of these, not daffodils! Spot the loose branches of pendant spikelets suspended on fine filamentous stalklets; the spikelets turn a pinky-mauve when ripening. If you encounter this species, you're almost certain to be in a species-rich grassland on base-rich or lime soils, sometimes around a wet flush or spring.



Rosemary Winnall

Tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*

A species of unkempt or under-grazed marshy situations with some waterlogging. It can dominate but adds an interesting habitat structure to damp grassland; the sort of place where snipe overwinter or curlew may nest. It grows in very distinctive tussocks with dainty, spreading flower heads. The leaves are strongly ridged on the upper side – be careful as you can easily cut yourself if you run your fingers in the wrong direction (downwards)!



Rosemary Winnall

Sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*

A typical species of permanent pastures and meadows across the county, this is identifiable by its oval-shaped, unbranched flower heads that look a little like a thin pussy willow flower. If you look at the junction of the leaf-blade and the leaf-sheath you'll notice a 'beard' of short hairs. It releases coumarins when crushed, which give it the distinctive sweet smell of new-mown hay (with a slightly honeyed vanilla flavour if chewed).



Michael Liley

Upright brome *Bromopsis erecta*

A tufted winter-green grass of dry, relatively infertile soils of under-grazed limestone grasslands, or the ridge tops of ridge and furrow meadows on clay soils, where it often forms dense stands. Look for tall flower heads with spreading panicle and purplish multi-flowered spikelets or the obliquely forward-pointing hairs along the edges of the leaf blades.

Discover more: www.field-studies-council.org/shop/publications/grasses-guide/

Greener futures



Follow our trainees:
www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/blog/conservation-trainees

Eight years ago I was a trainee with Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust, beginning a journey that has led me full circle to my current post where I have the privilege of leading my own team of trainees.

We launched our traineeships in 2020, providing four one-year placements within the nature reserves team. The traineeship is immensely beneficial for

the Trust; our trainees carry out much-needed jobs on our reserves, such as fence repairs and installing gates, as well as help lead volunteer tasks and contribute to a plethora of projects within other departments.

It's not all about us, though. Traineeships are a great way for aspiring conservationists to gain practical conservation management experience and the training needed to secure their

first role in wildlife conservation. I remember my year as a trainee fondly, even going so far as to call it one of the best years of my life! I hope some of our trainees might share that feeling in years to come.



Iain Turbin, WWT Practical Land Management Officer. Iain is a keen climber with ambitions to bag all Munros.



Career change
Lydia Rackham

Having started my working life in a GP surgery, by 2018 I'd taken the plunge and enrolled on an Animal Behaviour and Wildlife Conservation degree. Nature had always been my true passion and I hoped that the decision to change my path and return to education would mean that I could fulfil my dream of working in conservation.

I knew that I needed to gain some practical skills and so, when the traineeship opportunity came along, I jumped at the chance. I've completed loads of training like first aid, brush cutter and chainsaw. I've fixed boardwalks, gates and fences and even rowed my way across a pond. My ID skills have massively improved and my general knowledge for conservation issues and habitat management has expanded greatly with plenty of opportunities to get involved in lots of different things such as bird surveys, blogs and even creating videos.

Just after I was asked to write this, and five years on from when I decided to pursue my passion, I landed myself a role as an Assistant Wetlands Ranger in Devon. I can safely say that without the traineeship I would never have got the role and I'm so glad that I took the plunge to change career and live my dream of working in conservation.



Student
Amy Fleming

Since finishing my traineeship in September 2021, I have started my degree in Wildlife Conservation and Environmental Management and I am loving every minute of it! I was very nervous to begin with but I settled in quickly and met lots of like-minded people.

The traineeship taught me so much about the conservation of our natural environment and provided me with an abundance of practical experience to apply to my degree. During my traineeship, I became involved in dormice surveys and I've carried these on. I love it so much that I did my first assignment on the conservation status of dormice in the UK, something that I learnt so much about from the experience I gained with the Trust.

I have been able to get involved with lots of different things at university. I've been on field trips to environmentally friendly farms, been involved in online talks with ornithological organisations and recently I was able to gain experience in handling ecological detection dogs. My highlight so far was meeting the renowned entomologist and wildlife presenter Dr George McGavin, who was a guest speaker at a university event. I am continuing to volunteer with the Trust during holidays and I can't wait to get stuck into some practical habitat management soon.



Dream job
Jake Goodwin

I started my traineeship in September 2020 and learnt an incredible amount in such a small time. It sometimes felt like I was learning several new skills a day and, thanks to these skills, I secured my first paid role in conservation as a Reserve Officer for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust. Now, though, I have my dream role at Wildfowl and Wetland Trust's Caerlaverock in Scotland. I can't imagine being where I am without the traineeship.

I can't think of anyone better than Iain, my supervisor at Worcestershire, to learn from about practical management and tools. Since leaving, I've led fencing and infrastructure installation, built composters and nest boxes and Iain will be pleased to hear that I clean every tool after use! The knowledge and experience I gained helped me understand how to manage habitats in just the right way to benefit nature and biodiversity.

The people at Worcestershire who helped me develop have inspired me to give the best training for Caerlaverock's placement students. I want to make sure they get as good an experience as I did, whether that's building their knowledge of management plans, leading volunteer tasks and projects or more.

My experience with Worcestershire was amazing and it will always feel like home to me.

Celebrating wild people

Every year we celebrate the achievements of people helping wildlife in Worcestershire. The Worcestershire Wildlife Medal is presented for dedicated service to nature conservation in the county and the Wild Service Awards recognize outstanding voluntary service to the Trust.

Worcestershire Wildlife Medal 2022: Garth Lowe



Garth is an accomplished naturalist, having been chair and active member of the Worcestershire Naturalists Club and a long-standing contributor to Worcester and Malvern RSPB group. Garth has been involved in bird, bat, butterfly and swallow surveys for many years and is a life-long amateur ornithologist who has been involved in bird-ringing and research projects for decades. Garth was the first warden of The Knapp & Papermill and has undertaken butterfly surveys there for more than 30 years as well as looking after the Trust's rent-a-nest boxes on the reserve. As well as having a past role as a farmer alliance co-ordinator, Garth has also been a Parish Councillor where he was able to liaise with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and advocate for nature conservation. Garth's walks and talks to countless groups have inspired generations of children and adults to become involved in the study and protection of wildlife in Worcestershire.



Wendy Carter

Wild Service Awards 2022

- Steve Anderson, Penorchard volunteer and assistant to Reserves Officers.
- Claire Bolt, Lower Smite Farm farm volunteer, keen plant ID and surveyor.
- Sara Burton, Leader of Hill Court Farm work group, cattle checker and surveyor.
- Andy Bucklitch, Organiser of

- Monkwood dormouse surveys, training surveyors. WWT roving volunteer.
- Peter Farrimond, Lower Smite Farm farm volunteer.
- Carl Graef, WWT Roving volunteer. Volunteer photographer.
- Mike Hartwell, WWT Roving volunteer. Assistant warden at Monkwood.

- Brian Hill, Ipsley Alders Marsh volunteer.
- David Hoare, Ipsley Alders Marsh volunteer.
- Karen Mason, Lower Smite Farm garden volunteer.



What's in your pots?



4m cubic metres per year of growing media used by the horticultural industry.
c. 79% of this for the amateur gardening market.

Mark Hamblin, 2020VISION

Peat is a type of soil formed over millennia (about 1 mm per year) in wet conditions where dead plants can't rot down. The mosses that grow there hold on to the water like sponges, helping to maintain the wet environment.

As a specialist habitat, peatlands are home to rare plants, insects and birds such as carnivorous sundews, argent and sable moths and dunlins. Loss of peatlands is contributing to many species' declines, like the large heath butterfly whose caterpillars' foodplant is the hare's-tail cotton grass that grows almost exclusively on peatlands.

A natural flood defence, peat is also intrinsically linked to climate change as healthy peatlands keep huge amounts of carbon locked up. Peat bogs are the UK's single biggest carbon store; worldwide they cover 3% of the earth's surface but hold nearly 30% of all soil carbon. Conversely, damaged peatlands dry out and release the stored carbon.

Pleas to stop the destruction of peatlands have been heard for decades and many people have already switched

to peat-free compost. However, to make a real difference we need to remove peat from *all* retail products. It's important to realise that peat is not just in the bagged compost that we buy but is also used for many potted plants and shrubs and even in the 'pellets' that accompany growing kits. Even the pot of basil on a supermarket shelf could be growing in peat-based compost.

What can you do?

Check labels. There's no such thing as sustainable peat and 'low-peat' still contains unnecessary peat.

Be vocal. Ask retailers what peat-free products they have available and help demonstrate customer demand for these.

Use alternatives. You can make your own or use bark chippings, coir or wood fibre. Soil conditioner can be bought cheaply at local household waste sites.

Sow your own. Grow plants and herbs from seeds (or start a seed swap with neighbours) rather than buying from a shop.

Shop peat-free. Some bigger retailers have peat-free ranges (B&Q have also removed neonicotinoids from flowering plants) or buy from a peat-free nursery. Local ones include: Caves Folly Nurseries, Colwall; Hoo House Nursery, Tewkesbury; Wykeham Gardens, Malvern; Pershore College Garden Centre; The Cottage, Tenbury Wells; National Trust plant sales.

The added bonus of shopping at local peat-free nurseries is that their products are often organic and almost certain to be free of neonicotinoid pesticides, which harm our pollinators (but that's an article for another day...).



Joanna Kelly, WWT Membership Officer. Jo is a keen amateur wildlife gardener and butterfly enthusiast.



For more info visit: www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/actions/how-go-peat-free-home

From bikes to butterflies

If wildlife is going to recover and thrive, it needs our help. Thanks to funding from the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, we're working with communities and community groups in Worcester and building partnerships across the county to help people to help wildlife. In Worcester itself we're working to engage and inspire residents to get involved with nature's recovery and to help make access to nature more equal, diverse and inclusive.

I've been in post since October and am loving meeting so many people who are enthusiastic about helping wildlife where they live and helping others to get involved. I recently met Jenny Moreton from the Newtown Green Community Group in Worcester, a group of local residents who have already started to reclaim their local green space for people and wildlife.

Liz: How did it all begin?

Jenny: Newtown Green Community Group started their journey five years ago when we joined forces with Worcester City Council, Platform Housing, The Community Trust and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. We wanted to reach out to the local community in caring for Newtown Green, an urban green space that was originally given Village Green status in the 1980s. The site was under-used and there was litter everywhere. Over the years community interest has grown and where once the hedgerows were full of old bikes and litter, they are now full of wildlife.

We are lucky to be situated in the middle of Worcester sandwiched between Nunnery Wood High School, Worcester Woods Country Park, Royal Worcester Hospital and Ronkswood. The site is great as it supports a wide

range of species thanks to the variety of habitats present. We have areas of open grassland, including an area of medieval ridge and furrow. Other features include ancient hedgerows, a pond and the woodland edge, where there are also some very old large anthills.

Liz: What improvements have you made?

Jenny: A few years ago, the group established a meadow full of wildflowers for people to enjoy. The meadow is now full of bees and butterflies in the summer months and is so popular that the group is looking to establish another one.

Another consideration was access and so pathways were improved across the site to improve conditions and allow children to walk to school in all weathers without being covered in mud.

During lockdown a community orchard was planted full of fruit trees.

This is known fondly as Trev's Orchard in memory of one of the founding members of the group who passed recently. A memorial bench has been created from an old tree stump and is there for locals to enjoy. Spring flowers are abundant and provide food for early pollinators such as bumblebees. More recently bird and bat boxes have been put up around the site and it will be great to see if they used this season. Tawny owls are often heard in the area and might make use of the new home.

Liz: Has the project brought the community together?

Jenny: The community has really come together and we now run a host of regular events on the green: health walks, weekly litter picks, Marathon Kids, plogging (jogging and picking up litter) and community dog walks. We also put on events throughout the year such as Bands in the Park and Teddy Bear's Picnics and wildlife walks, talks and surveys. Over the years the group have taken part in wildlife walks and surveys, identifying a wide range of flora and fauna including slow-worms,

great crested newts, bats and many butterflies and moths, particularly along the path now referred to by the group as Butterfly Alley. A schedule of events is planned for the summer months.

Liz: How do you see the future?

Jenny: We want Newtown Green to be part of nature's recovery within Worcester City, connecting to other green spaces via gardens and more, and provide a community space for locals to enjoy. We want to build on community support and all the fantastic work that has gone into the area so far and this will hopefully go from strength to strength.

Anyone who is interested in knowing more about Newtown Green and what can be achieved when a community acts together for wildlife can contact Jenny via email: jenmoreton@yahoo.co.uk



Liz Yorke, WWT Wilder Communities Officer. Liz is passionate about inspiring and connecting people to the natural world.

For more information and to get involved:
www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wilder-worcester
www.facebook.com/newtowngreen/

Green Recovery Challenge Fund



The project has been funded through the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund, a multi-million pound boost for green jobs and nature's recovery, which was developed by Defra and its Arm's-Length Bodies. The fund is being delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England, the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission.



Joshua Copping



Paul Edwards



Paul Edwards



Paul Edwards



Paul Edwards

Fresh faces

There's a whole world of wildlife hidden beneath the surface of our streams, rivers and lakes. It's often out of sight and out of mind but spend a while watching a still section of water and you could catch a glimpse of a whole host of fish. Perhaps a pike lurking in a shadowy stretch, poised to pounce on passing prey, or a raft of roach roaming near the surface. Here are six fantastic freshwater fish to look out for:



Name: Chub
Scientific name: *Squalius cephalus*
Size: Up to 60cm

This thick-set fish inspired the word chubby, possibly aided by its eclectic appetite. They're known to eat anything from plant debris and invertebrates to smaller fish and frogs. The large mouth is a key identification feature! Chub favour rivers and streams, as they need flowing water to breed, but can sometimes be found in lakes.



Name: European eel
Scientific name: *Anguilla anguilla*
Size: Can be over 100cm

Eels have an extraordinary lifestyle, much of which remains a mystery. They breed in the sea, then their tiny larvae drift for two or three years on Gulf Stream currents to European and North African shores. Some remain in coastal waters whilst others migrate upstream into freshwater habitats, maturing and living long lives until spawning urges drive them to migrate back to sea. Although now critically endangered, eels can be found in almost any watery place and can even wriggle across land in wet conditions.



Name: Pike
Scientific name: *Esox lucius*
Size: Up to 150cm

This fearsome fish has a distinctive look, with a long, stretched-out green body splashed with yellowish markings. The fins are set far back on the body, perfect for a sudden burst of speed as they dash towards their prey – like a torpedo with teeth. Pike like to lurk amongst underwater plants, darting from their hiding place to ambush other fish, frogs, small mammals and even birds. They can be found in many canals, rivers, reservoirs and lakes.



Name: Brown trout
Scientific name: *Salmo trutta*
Size: Usually up to 80cm

This adaptable fish can be found in waters across the UK, from Cornish rivers to Scottish lochs. Some brown trout live out their whole life in freshwater, whilst others known as 'sea trout' spawn in freshwater but migrate to coastal seas to grow. They eat a varied diet, including insects, crustaceans and small fish.



Name: Perch
Scientific name: *Perca fluviatilis*
Size: Up to 60cm

This green-tinted fish has the dark stripes of a tiger and an appetite to match. They're piscivorous predators that regularly feast on other fish, as well as invertebrates. Smaller perch are often found in schools close to the bank. They are one of our most widespread fish and can be found in almost any freshwater habitat.



Name: Roach
Scientific name: *Rutilus rutilus*
Size: Up to 50cm

The silvery, red-eyed roach is one of the UK's most common fish and can be found in almost any waterway. They can form large shoals, sometimes seen close to the surface but often lower down. To separate it from the similar looking rudd, look at the dorsal fin on its back: in the roach, this is level with the pelvic fin below the body; the rudd's dorsal fin is set further back.

Underwater lake © Graham Eaton NaturePL.com. Illustrations by Kaye Frost

Wildlife, climate change and Worcestershire



www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/blog/climate-wildlife
<https://nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019/>
<https://climateactiontracker.org/>

Guy Edwardes, 2020/ISON

Global temperatures have increased by 1.2 °C since the start of the industrial revolution and are continuing to rise. Along with increased temperatures, we can expect more droughts, floods and wildfires. As well as mitigating climate change – by reducing emissions as quickly and thoroughly as possible – we need to think ahead and adapt to the changes we know are coming.

Moving home

Many species are having to move north, or to higher altitudes, where temperatures are cooler. This is happening globally, nationally and locally; colleagues were excited to spot little egret in the UK only 30 years ago, for example. With this excitement comes sadness as we realise that other species, including migratory birds like cuckoos, are becoming rarer or going locally extinct.

Wildlife's ability to move is hampered by our highly fragmented landscapes and, to add a further blow, isolated populations have a lower genetic diversity so are less able to evolve. To help wildlife move with the changing climate we need to create landscape-scale corridors and stepping-stones of habitats.

Planning for the future

When creating new habitats we need to consider the climate of the future. For woodlands, this may mean introducing plants from hotter, drier climates, potentially including some

non-native species. This needs careful consideration and planning as there are risks involved. Ideas like this oppose some traditional biodiversity conservation principles but the climate is changing rapidly and our thinking needs to change too.

Nature-based solutions use natural processes and habitats to solve problems – creating woodland to absorb carbon, saltmarsh to reduce coastal erosion, wetlands to help prevent flooding and planting trees to provide shade and shelter. They can be win-win solutions that support wildlife and help mitigate and adapt to climate change and other problems.

Action is needed now

The United Nations Paris Agreement aims to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5 °C but current policies and actions are expected to result in heating of 2.7 °C. If this happens, the results will be catastrophic. Individual choices and actions are important but we also need significant societal change – where our energy comes from, how our buildings are constructed, insulated and heated, how we travel, what we wear and how we produce food.

Everything we do – as individuals, as communities and as a society – needs to be seen through the lens of climate change. Without a rapid shift in thinking we will only make things harder for the future, harder for our children and harder for wildlife. It will take considerable personal and political will but if we act quickly, we can avoid the worst impacts of the climate and biodiversity crises.

Six things you can do



Write to councillors and MPs to let them know that this is an important issue for you.



Switching to sustainable banking and investments can make a big difference to your personal impact.



Go more plant-based, buy local and only buy meat and dairy raised to high environmental standards.



Create gardens with pollinator-friendly flowers, undisturbed corners, ponds, shade and good connectivity to other gardens and greenspaces. Avoid peat and pesticides.



Congratulating organisations, businesses, councils and politicians for doing planet-positive actions is just as powerful as complaining about negative ones.



The most sustainable thing you can buy is what you already own – refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle.



Sean Webber, WWT Carbon Reduction and Sustainability Officer. Sean is an ecologist and environmentalist who

enjoys exploring the countryside.

Wild images

Thank you so much to everyone who entered this year's photography competition – we had another year of amazing entries and judging was as hard as ever. Congratulations to the winners and runners-up.

Three photos faced off against each other in a public vote to win a place on the front cover. Congratulations to **Nick Thompson** whose fabulous **brown hare** will be the face of our 2023 calendar.

If you're out and about taking photographs, please remember:

- The welfare of the wildlife always comes first
- Don't prevent wildlife from going about their normal business
- Don't stray from paths

Thank you to our external judges: Pete Walkden, www.petewalkden.co.uk and Jason Curtis, www.wyrewildlife.co.uk



Calendars are available to buy – see back page for details.

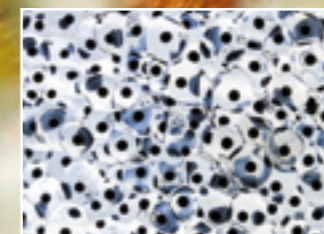
Our winners are:



January: Linda Jones



February: Anil Patel



March: Richard Clifford



April: Jill Orme



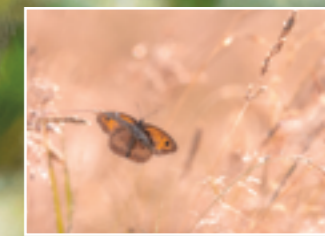
May: Peter Cheshire



June: Nick Thompson



July: Richard Clifford



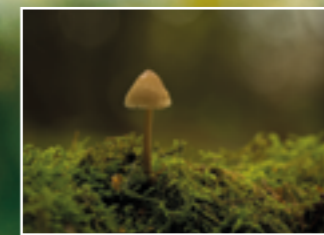
August: Carl Harris



September: Rebekah Nash



October: Gillian Smith



November: Ira James



December: Pat Pitt

Wild notebook



All photographs by Rosemary Winnall



★ STAR SPECIES

Lammas oak growth on oak

As I wander through the woodland in late summer, I notice lammas growth on many oak trees that all show new leaves flushed with a red pigment. I've seen this on other trees and bushes too. Perhaps the spring leaves are now old, leathery and unpalatable and these new leaves provide an extra late summer food source for some creatures. Lammas Day on 1st August was traditionally when people celebrated the first wheat harvest, baking their first bread with the new grain.

Common burying beetle *Nicrophorus vespillo*

In my moth trap I spot this undertaker of the animal world. These fly at night looking for carrion and can, it is said, smell a rotting carcass from two miles away! They (and several similar beetles) bury small mammals or birds and breed on the corpses – great recyclers!



Golden spindles *Clavulinopsis fusiformis*

I could see this group of pointed yellow fairy clubs from far away in the unimproved meadow. Their clusters arise from a fused base and many of the fingers are laterally compressed and grooved. They don't appear every year and disappear completely if the ground is fertilised.



Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus*

This attractive male butterfly must have just emerged (females don't have the brown markings across the centre of the forewing). They are often seen in grassy places with meadow browns and ringlets, neither which settle with their wings open. Their caterpillars feed on fine grasses such as bents, fescues and meadow grasses.

A water strider *Aquarius paludum*

I spot this very large pond skater, twice the size of our usual ones, skimming over the water on a local lake. It has long abdominal spines that angle upwards and reach the end of its body and a yellow line down its side – another recent arrival to our county.



Nigma walckenaeri (female)

I search my garden ivy-covered wall for this tiny 5mm spider that I have been watching. Yes, it is still there in its webbed retreat. I've also found ones on holly and lilac. It used to be rare but has extending its range since 1993. I wonder if there's a male nearby?

A saucer bug *Aphelocheirus aestivalis*

We walk out into the river riffles in our wellies to find this wingless saucer bug amongst the gravel where we've seen it before. This is our only underwater bug, never leaving the water where it feeds on small invertebrates and breathes through air caught in hairs around its body.



Scarlet caterpillar club fungus *Cordyceps militaris*

A great find – a fungus that has emerged from a moth caterpillar! Infected caterpillars burrow into the soil to pupate and the fungus kills and devours them. Two or three spring clubs may arise from the same caterpillar. Although colourful, they are often overlooked within a grassy sward.



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

Summer wildlife gardening

The garden in summer is busy, as froglets and toadlets leave the pond for the first time, fledgling birds beg for food and the whole garden buzzes with life.

In the sky, swallows, house martins and swifts gather insects to feed their young and, at night, bats take their place, foraging among the treetops or swooping low over ponds.

If you haven't already, leave an area of grass to grow long, particularly around your pond. Long grass provides the perfect shelter for young amphibians and food for the caterpillars of several butterflies including the ringlet, meadow brown and speckled wood. Here, you'll also find beetles and bugs, plentiful prey for a variety of species further up the food chain, like hedgehogs. Later

in the season, the grasses will seed and you may spot house sparrows stripping them for food. Avoid strimming your grass at all if you

can but if you must, be sure to check for hedgehogs and other wildlife first!

Being more tolerant of naturally occurring plants is also important in a wildlife garden. Anything from dandelions to nettles, dock and chickweed provide food and shelter for a wide range of species. Let them flourish! Or at least leave a few around the edges.

It's also a good time to do an audit of flowering plants in your garden. Fill gaps with flowering annuals such as cosmos and borage, which are magnets for bees and other pollinators. Towards the end of summer, add *Verbena bonariensis*, rudbeckias and echinaceas for insects still on the wing. You can also sow foxgloves and other biennials now, which will flower next year.

If conditions are dry, it's a good idea

to water insect foodplants so they don't shrivel up and ensure flowers continue to bear nectar. Use water from your water butt if you have one and grey water from baths and washing up bowls if you don't – avoid using tap water as this is a precious resource. Leaving a dish of mud can help house martins fix and build their nests and providing water – in a pond, bird bath or other container – will ensure foxes and hedgehogs have something to drink, while birds can bathe and clean their feathers.

Take advantage of fine weather to construct that log pile you've been meaning to build or start a large, open compost heap where wild things can live. There are always improvements to make in our gardens and summer is a fine time to do them. What can you add?



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



Illustration: Hannah Bailey; Photo of Kate Bradbury: Sarah Outtle

The amazing world of galls

Words & photos: Harry Green & Rosemary Winnall

Have you ever seen an abnormal growth on a plant and wondered what it was? It was probably a gall, caused by another organism that has triggered the plant to react, enlarging or proliferating its cells or tissues to provide protection and nutrition for the gall causer. There can be a world in miniature within a gall but that is a story for another time.

Most galls are found on leaves but stems, buds and other parts can be affected. Look at plants in hedges, along woodland edges or even in your own garden.



Alder tongue

Gall causer: *Taphrina alni*. This fungus infects female alder catkins, chemically distorting them into tongue-like growths. The galls change colour as they develop, from cream through red, purple and eventually brown.



Hairy beech galls

Gall causer: *Hartigiola annulipes*, a gall midge. Eggs are laid on beech leaf buds in spring and each gall contains one larva. Galls may be smooth or hairy and by autumn they fall, leaving round holes in the leaves. Pupation occurs over winter within the fallen galls.



Thistle gall

Gall causer: *Urophora cardui*, a picture-winged fly. Eggs are laid on creeping thistle in summer and the larvae burrow into the stem where galls are formed. There are several larvae to each gall where they overwinter before emerging as adults in spring when the plant has started to rot and soften.



Red pustule galls

Gall causer: *Aceria myriadeum*, a mite. Galls are found commonly on field maple leaves, each containing several mites. In autumn the mite leaves the gall through a hairy opening on the underside of the leaves, overwintering in cracks in tree bark.



Silk button galls

Gall causer: *Neuroterus numismalis*, a gall wasp. Many thousands of galls may form on the underside of leaves on the sunny side of an oak tree in a good year, one larva per gall. These overwinter in the gall, emerge in the spring and this generation produce blister galls on oak leaves.



Robin's pincushion

Gall causer: *Dipolepis rosae*, a gall wasp. The many-chambered galls, each with a larva, develop bright red hairs during the summer, growing on roses mainly on stems. The galls remain all winter and adults emerge in the spring. Males are very rare and females lay eggs without mating.

(Left) Tassel or jumping louse galls

Gall causer: *Livia juncorum*, a psyllid bug. Eggs are laid on flowering spikes of *Juncus* rushes, the plant producing distorted flower spikes (each containing a larva) bunched into a tassel. The adults emerge in autumn, overwintering at ground level.



Your letters

We'd love to hear from you! Please send your letters to editor@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org

Martin Lancashire



Disappointed buzzards

My wife had two buzzards on our lawn today in Droitwich. A single buzzard came a few weeks ago when there was some meat/fat out. This time it was only bread. My wife said they looked very disappointed!

Martin Lancashire

Ed. It's unusual to see buzzards in a garden and they must have thought that the bread you'd put out was something a bit more interesting – they usually only come down to meat (even if that is picking worms from fields). We'd be interested to hear from other readers who have watched what buzzards eat (or even had them in their gardens too).

Phil Ruler



Spring gets underway

All of a sudden butterflies seem everywhere in my garden despite a cool breeze.

Phil Ruler

Kingfisher

Seen at Upton Warren's The Moors.

Alan Giles

Ed. Kingfishers are regularly seen at The Moors – look on one of the many perches in front of the hides.



Alan Giles

KEEP IN TOUCH

✉ Sign up to our e-newsletter: www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/e-newsletter

📘 www.facebook.com/worcestershirowildlifetrust

🐦 @WorcsWT

📺 www.flickr.com/groups/worcestershirowildlifetrust

📺 www.youtube.com/c/WorcsWildlifeTrustUK1

Social feeds

The Knapp & Papermill yesterday (May). [Paul Lane](#)



Paul Lane

We've claimed this patch of highway for wildlife! Look at the cheeky dandelion that has already set seed in the bottom corner of the sign!

[@DuncanWestbury](#)



Duncan Westbury

The swifts are back! Swooping and screeching around Fort Royal and Sidbury #Worcester this afternoon. My first this year, so summer has officially arrived! They've had a long trip.

[@BirderWorcs](#)



Cale Ingram



Christmas Gifts

Enjoy Christmas and help wildlife



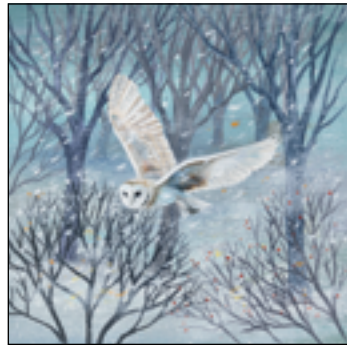
GREETINGS CARDS

£4

This year's cards are encased in cardboard wallets, every element is recyclable, no foil, no glitter and no plastic bags. £4 per pack (10 cards). Message reads 'Season's Greetings and Best Wishes for the New Year.'



Winter Hare



Barn Owl and Winter Trees



Kingfisher in Winter



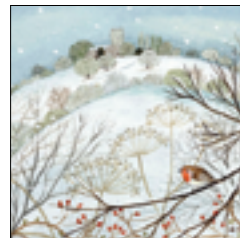
Moonlit Landscape



Badgers on a Winter's Night



Snow Flurry



Winter Landscape

RENT-A-NEST

£15

Keep our woodlands alive with birdsong. Rent a nest box in one of four woodlands and your loved one will receive an invite in spring to see who's taken up residence. You'll also receive a lovely card to give.

VIRTUAL GIFTS

£10-15

For the difficult to buy for relative or friend, why not send one of our beautiful virtual gift cards? See our virtual gift page on the online shop. (E-versions also available.)

ADOPT-A-SPECIES

£15

Our wildlife e-adoptions are the perfect gift for animal lovers. They also help us to protect precious habitats across the county in which our wonderful wildlife live. Simply choose your loved one's favourite animal and we'll email them a fabulous adoption pack. Check out our website shop for further details.

STOCKING TREATS

Give your Christmas stockings a wildlife theme by filling them with tins of seedballs, gorgeous wildlife tea towels, mugs, calendars and more.

OUTLETS

Christmas cards will also be available from Lower Smite Farm (during office hours), The Fold in Bransford, Clive's Fruit Farms, Upton Snodsbury Village Store, Gwillams Farm Shop, The Pump House Environmental Centre, Droitwich Heritage Centre, Revills Farm Shop near Pershore, The Hop Pocket in Bishop's Frome, Nature's Intention in Bromsgrove and Alfrick Community Shop.

A big thank you to all these retailers for their continued support!

To order, visit:

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Call us on 01905 754919 to pay over the phone or request an order form to pay by cheque.



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