

Worcestershire **WILDLIFE**



Worcestershire
Wildlife Trust





Welcome

Each year we recognise the exceptional contribution made to the Trust's work by our wonderful volunteers through the presentation of Wild Service Awards. Volunteer numbers are growing and are integral to every aspect of our work; this year we have made more awards more than ever before. Our volunteers provide 44,500 hours of their time, the equivalent value of over £500,000. A huge thank you to every one of them!

The Trust's new strategy, A Wilder Worcestershire, sets out our ambitions to promote and enable nature's recovery over the next seven years. The strategy is based on the three collective goals agreed by all Wildlife Trusts. A 10-point plan summarises how we will go about achieving these in Worcestershire:

Nature in recovery, 30 per cent of land in recovery for nature by 2030.

- Ensure our nature reserves are places where wildlife thrives.
- Build bigger, wilder, connected landscapes and townscapes for wildlife and for people.
- Demonstrate how restoring nature can deliver broader environmental and other benefits.

Action for nature, one in four people taking action for nature by 2030.

- Develop communications to be bolder and transformational.
- Influence decision making to prioritise nature.
- Engage and support diverse local communities to lead action for nature.
- Connect people with nature.

Sustaining our future, more diversity, more funding, carbon zero by 2030.

- Continue to grow and diversify funding streams and other resources for our work.
- Ensure we are a values-led, inclusive organisation where all achieve their potential.
- Develop clear and consistent evidence-based policies.

Putting nature into recovery must be what we turn all our efforts to now – it must be the priority. It won't be easy. This is a complex challenge and the next seven years will be just the start but we can do it. You can read the full strategy here: bit.ly/WWTStrat23-30



Colin Raven

Colin Raven, Director

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Paul Lane

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Mark Hamblin/2020VISION

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Andy Warr

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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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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

Events Discover Worcestershire's wildlife while meeting like-minded people worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on

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

Our wild networks

Burlish Meadows

Natural Networks turns five this year; not bad for a three-year programme!

Funded by the European Regional Development Fund, with support from the Environment Agency, it's an exciting collaboration between Worcestershire County Council and the Trust that blends the Council's grant-giving capabilities with our wildlife expertise. We help local organisations like district and parish councils, small businesses and friends-of groups to deliver habitat enhancement across Worcestershire. The aim is to improve existing publicly accessible green spaces for wildlife, make habitat patches bigger where possible and create new ones to help link existing sites together. Collectively this helps to deliver sites that are bigger, better and more joined up, a common nature conservation theme across much of the Trust's work.

So far so standard but where Natural Networks stands out is in the places it targets for help. Traditionally, much of the landowner advice and funding available for habitat enhancement has been focussed on farmland, offering money for habitat interventions in agricultural landscapes, often at a large scale. However, we all know that there are myriad smaller pockets of land tucked into our towns, villages and countryside that are not farmed but could be much richer in wildlife. Experience also shows that masses of people are keen to help if only someone can offer practical 'how to' advice and perhaps a little money to make ideas a reality. That's where Natural Networks comes in.

Over the next couple of pages, the team introduce you to some of the project's achievements.

*Thanks to you
We're connecting
stepping stones
for wildlife across
Worcestershire.*

Wendy Carter



Carter's Weir with baffles fitted as an easement.

Becca Bratt

From the very start of the Natural Networks journey it's been apparent that the best projects are those driven by local people, specialists and interested amateurs alike, which makes this article as much a thank you to them as it is a summary of our work to date. Very often we've found ourselves responding to already well thought through proposals where simply providing up to 45 per cent of the funding has been enough to enable action on the ground. On other occasions, applicants have been desperate to do their bit for nature but have needed a bit more conservation advice to set a trajectory for success. In either case, Natural Networks has been there to fill in the gaps between a green space in need of help and one that's really delivering for wildlife.

Working across the county means that the team visit all sorts of sites, at all scales and in all states of ecological 'repair'. One of the earliest of the 170 projects completed involved the restoration of Burlish Golf Course near Kidderminster. Wyre Forest District Council had ambitions to enhance this important open space for wildlife

and people and we were pleased to get involved. Eventually more than 20ha of acid grassland, ponds and new sandy habitats were restored or created, some of them on the site of a previous open landfill site. There's something especially pleasing about converting a site full of decaying fridges and other rubbish into a mecca for bees and butterflies!

Kempsey Parish Council also had a site clean-up in mind and approached the team for help at The Rocky, a small public park in the village, which is south of Worcester. Formerly part of Kempsey House's ornamental gardens, the park includes a small woodland and a section of the Hatfield Brook but was badly affected by the non-native invasive Himalayan balsam. We provided advice and funding for removal of this troublesome plant as well as for coppicing trees to allow more light to penetrate to the brook, enhancement of wetland habitats and erection of bird and bat boxes. Together, these have greatly improved the biodiversity, with new bulbs and wetland plants providing an excellent source of nectar for wild pollinators, for example. Although only

small, works at The Rocky demonstrate that even simple actions can really make a difference.

A perennial problem affecting large areas of the county is flooding. North Worcestershire Water Management were keen to address this along a section of footpath – the Millennium Way – running alongside the Battlefield Brook in Catshill. To allow the site to hold a greater quantity of water in times of heavy rain, an old ditch channel was reinstated, a shallow, wildlife-friendly pond created and further enhancements to the brook were made including bay creation and bank reinforcement using natural materials from the site. The Natural Networks team were even able to get their hands dirty helping community members to plant native wildflowers.

Other watery sites receiving funding included the River Stour in Kidderminster. Severn Rivers Trust worked hard to design and successfully install an eel pass and a weir easement to remove barriers to fish migration along the watercourse, allowing aquatic wildlife such as Atlantic salmon and



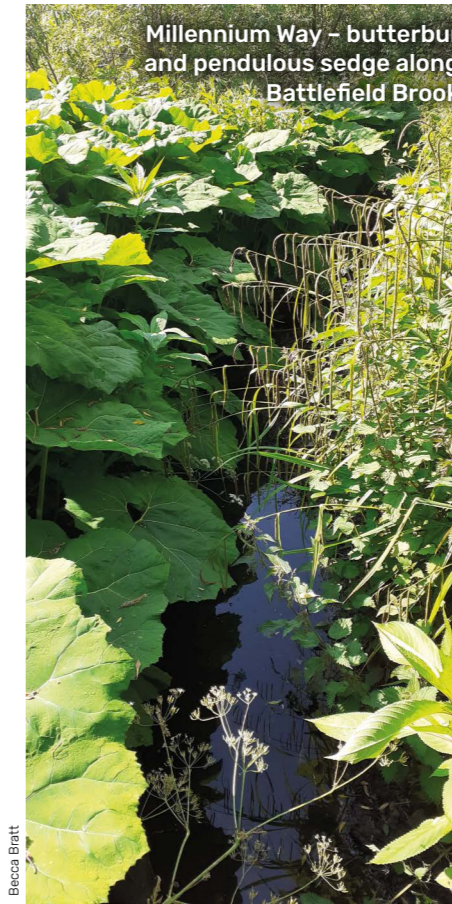
Cromwell Crescent Park vertical log stack

Becca Bratt

European eel to access parts of the river inaccessible to them for many years. Other species, such as kingfisher, will also benefit from the additional food source now colonising the upper reaches of the river.

One of our smallest sites, Cromwell Crescent Park falls on the southeastern edge of Worcester City. Habitat and access improvements in the park include mini wildflower meadows, native tree planting, bird and bat boxes – one already hosts a tawny owl – and the creation of several reptile and amphibian hibernacula. One of the most valuable resources for wildlife at the park is the quantity of deadwood that has been retained from tree management. Human and animal visitors alike can benefit from the impressive natural seating and vertical log piles dotted around this urban oasis.

These fantastic projects give a tiny flavour of the work completed to date. Not only do they illustrate intended benefits for wildlife and people, they also deliver the so-called ecosystem services we all rely on including helping to reduce flooding, capturing and storing



Millennium Way – butterbur and pendulous sedge along Battlefield Brook

Becca Bratt

carbon and cleaning up pollution. These benefits mean we and our partners are keen to press on with more Natural Networks projects in future. Therefore, while the European funding that's underpinned work so far ends this year, we're pleased to say that funding for the next two years has been secured. We look forward to further working in partnership with the Council and creating and restoring more habitat for wildlife in the future!



Steve Bloomfield, WWT Senior Conservation Officer is a keen birder and insect bather.



Becca Bratt, WWT Natural Networks Officer. Is always uplifted and inspired by nature.



Finley Reynolds, WWT Natural Networks Officer is passionate about providing nature spaces for all.

Conservation advice given on over **2,630 ha** of land.

139+ ha of habitat directly created or enhanced.

27,700+ trees and shrubs planted.

77,500+ bulbs and plug plants planted.

800+ bird, bug and bat boxes erected.

4,400+ metres of hedges planted.

1,350+ metres of waterway enhanced.

50+ ponds and wetlands created or enhanced.

Local news



Liz Yorke

Creating a wilder Worcestershire

A few weeks before your magazine arrived, our Wilder Worcestershire – Nature’s Recovery for All project came to an end after just under two years. The project was supported by the Government’s Green Recovery Challenge Fund and since September 2021 it has funded the Trust to:

- Recruit 103 fantastic new volunteers, including practical conservation volunteers and new volunteer wardens at our most visited sites.
- Work with 10 schools in Worcester to improve their sites for wildlife and to engage with their pupils.
- Involve 384 people in practical

improvement sessions to improve access to nature where they live.

- Better protect our most visited sites through a new Community Wildlife Warden who engages with visitors to help them to understand the nature they can see and hear.
- Produce regular content for our social media channels, including popular features like our Seasonal Snippets.

This vital funding came at a difficult time in the country, when measures were still in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19. There was then the subsequent economic challenges we have all faced. The project supported

existing activities of the Trust to continue alongside new work. While the project has sadly come to an end, our work in these areas is continuing.

Find out more www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/community-action

Green Recovery Challenge Fund



The National Lottery Heritage Fund



Spotting wildlife

Our Wildlife Sightings scheme celebrated its third birthday in May and we’re delighted that it’s so far received more than 900 verified records of wildlife. Can you help us to reach 1000 records before the year is out? Whilst we are specifically looking for sightings of 15 target species (including house sparrows, moles, red-tailed bumblebees and house martins), we’re also happy for you to send us photos of any wildlife you see and even wildlife that you’d like us to help you identify. All we’ll need is a photo and some details about when and where you saw it. We’ve got a short form on our website to help you provide us with all the relevant information

www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings



Francesca Green

Wild in June

Wow! A wonderful 1,200 of you signed up this year’s 30 Days Wild during June. This month-long extravaganza of wildness encourages as many people as possible to get closer to nature and make it part of everyday life. Here’s to going 365 days wild!



Paul Harris/2020VISION

Creating a corridor of trees

Severn Treescapes, our exciting partnership project with Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trusts, continues to accelerate across all three counties. Our April partnership event, hosted at Little lakes Golf Course on the fringe of the Wyre Forest, was very well attended by local landowners who heard presentations from the Forestry Commission, Worcestershire County Council, the National Farmers Union and the Trust on the benefits and

opportunities associated with increasing tree stocks on farmland. Our Trees and Woodland Advisor, Laurence, has been busy visiting and giving advice to landowners interested in increasing the number of trees on their land ever since!

You can find out more about the project at www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/severn-treescapes



Brian Taylor

Climate consequence

Trust member and photographer Clive Haynes has produced an online book with imagined photographs of what Worcester could look like as a result of climate change. To find out more about what inspired Clive to embark on this creative journey, and to see his images, read his guest blog on our website www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/blog/climate-wildlife



The Hive c.24-metre rise in sea level

© Clive Haynes 2023



Wendy Carter

We bet you didn't know

That lawn mowers were invented in Gloucestershire in 1830 . . . but that leaving parts of your lawn unmown can really give wildlife a boost! Discover more about how lawns can help wildlife: www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wild-about-lawns

Restoration decade

In June we celebrated 10 years of Coronation Meadows; the initiative from the former Prince of Wales, now King Charles III, to honour the 60th year of the late Queen's accession to the throne. A species-rich meadow would be restored or created for every year of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

With your help we bought Hollybed Farm Meadows in 2013 and Far Starling Bank, one of the nature reserve's fields and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), became Worcestershire's Coronation Meadow. Each year since, a portion of seed has been harvested from Far Starling Bank and spread on fields across the nature reserve. Restoration is a long process but we are already seeing wildflowers like green-winged orchids spring up in new places.



Andrew Forecast, volunteer reserve manager, sorting seed at Hollybed Farm Meadows

Events near you

- Wed 2 August. **A walk through time along the Smestow** with our Stourbridge and Hagley Local Group
- Thur 7 September. **Marvellous Molluscs** – indoor talk by Rosemary Winnall with our Malvern Local Group
- Sat 25 November. **Christmas Craft Fair** – the return of our popular event at Lower Smite Farm.

Visit www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on for information about all our events and details on how to book.

Raffle reminder

It's that time of year when our raffle is almost ready to be drawn. Don't forget to return your stubs or, if you've mislaid them, you can buy your tickets from our online shop <https://bit.ly/WWTRffl23> or from Lower Smite Farm.

Digital magazine

If you'd like to try our magazine in digital format, a pdf is available to download from our website www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/magazineJul23. There's a short form on the website for you to let us know how you'd like to receive future issues of the magazine.

E-cards

Want to give the postie a break? We've got a wide selection of cards to send via email for a small donation. From birthdays to thank yous, anniversaries to good lucks, take a look at what's available www.dontsendmeacard.com/ecards/charities/worcestershire-wildlife-trust



UK news

Wild Isles on location with Wildlife Trusts



This spring, viewers were captivated by Sir David Attenborough's latest documentary, Wild Isles. The show celebrated the wildlife of the British Isles, demonstrating to an audience of millions that the UK is home to incredible animals, dramatic battles for survival and internationally important wild places. Many of the spectacular scenes shown in the documentary were captured on Wildlife Trust nature reserves.

The cameras revealed the incredible lifecycle of the large blue butterfly at Daneway Banks in Gloucestershire, where caterpillars trick ants into accepting them into their nest. At Wiltshire's Langford Lakes they filmed hobbies hawking for dragonflies, snatching them from the air with

lightning reflexes, whilst at Lackford Lakes in Suffolk they revealed rabbits being hunted by buzzards. Flowers featured strongly as well, from buzzing meadows to the fly-fooling lords-and-ladies, with visits to Avon's Prior's Wood and Hutton Woods, Gloucestershire's Lower Woods, and Wiltshire's Clattinger Meadows.

Sir David himself travelled to Skomer Island in Pembrokeshire, to marvel at Manx shearwaters and sit amongst the puffins as he reflected on the threats facing our wild isles. The show didn't shy away from discussing the worrying declines in our wildlife, or the actions that have led to them.

Long may they bloom

This year marks the tenth anniversary of Coronation Meadows, a restoration project launched in 2013 to celebrate 60 years since the coronation of Elizabeth II. As part of the project, many Wildlife Trusts provided seeds from their own meadows to create or restore meadows in other parts of

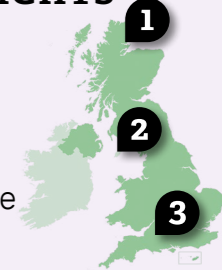
their region. Wildlife Trusts also took on custodianship of some of the new meadows, helping wildlife flourish. A new audit has revealed the success of the project, with 101 new wildflower meadows created or restored over the last decade.



Sweetenham Meadows, Alison Hitchens

Wildflower meadows are essential habitats for pollinators

UK HIGHLIGHTS



Discover how The Wildlife Trusts are helping wildlife across the UK

1 Birds not birdies

The Scottish Wildlife Trust is part of a coalition of seven environmental organisations fighting to save rare coastal dunes from the construction of a golf course. Proposals to develop Coul Links in East Sutherland threaten irreparable harm to a vital and protected habitat. The proposals come just three years after a previous application was turned down due to the damage it would cause nature. wtru.st/coul-links-proposal

2 Fungi find

An incredibly rare fungus has been discovered in a survey by Manx Wildlife Trust and the Isle of Man Fungus Group, working with Manx farmers. The butterscotch waxcap, *Gliophorus europerplexus*, had never been recorded on the island before, with only 70 specimens of the species recorded worldwide. wtru.st/new-waxcap

3 Healing nature

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust has launched a new 10-week nature-based-therapy programme for veterans and service leavers living with mental health issues. Wild Transitions will take place at the Trust's Green Lane Wood nature reserve, providing a space for veterans to connect with nature and learn skills to help them transition into new employment or volunteer roles. wtru.st/WildTransitions



Liz Charter/Isle of Man Fungi Group

Worcestershire's

nature reserves

Mid July starts to see a change in management on our meadow-rich Worcestershire nature reserves. Having delayed cutting to ensure our wildflowers are bursting with seedpods, ready to fall and establish for next season, we cut and turn the hay, allowing it to dry and disperse the seeds before baling. Plans are then made to think about autumn and winter work, laying

and cutting hedges, and reviewing information gathered by staff and volunteers from surveys to assess how effective our management has been and tweaking as necessary. Gathering survey data is a huge job across many sites and many species, requiring persistence and skill, although this has been made easier by new identification apps on phones that can help to identify

plants and animals from quick snaps or birdsong. It can be quite addictive and is a good way to learn; try it and don't forget to submit any records from our reserves to us either via email or our Wildlife Sightings form.

As in previous years, we have been gathering small amounts of wildflower seed from some of our richer meadows to enhance less diverse meadows as well as working with others to create

new wildflower meadows local to the donor sites. This year we are hoping to do further seed spreading at Hollybed Farm Meadows, Hill Court Farm, Nash's and Sands meadows. We collect only small amounts from any one site and then leave them to rest for several years – a little seed can go a long way.

With meadow management squared away, and with dry ground conditions, it is the perfect time to

mend and install all the infrastructure for grazing and visitors. Fencing is an ongoing job and the final fencing and water supply will go in this summer at Romsley Manor Farm Meadows, allowing proper grazing for the first time in four years and marking the beginning of the restoration of the site. The mix of scrub, wet and drier grassland is already good for wildlife – a recent record of a singing

grasshopper warbler shows the existing quality of the site – we only expect it to get better as we establish a proper grazing regime.

Fencing and water is also going in at Green Farm and we will be ready for tree planting this autumn to create the mix of woodland, orchard and wood pasture that will make this such a great addition to the adjacent Monkwood.



Paul Lane

Heather restoration

Our other big restoration project is Dropping Well Farm. As well as agreeing the route of a circular trail, in partnership with our neighbours Wyre Forest District Council, we are also hoping to see the first signs of new heather that's been taken from heather cut from adjacent The Devil's Spittleful and spread last winter. Although a simple approach, this is a new technique for us and we really hope to see this kickstart the creation of new areas of heathland, benefitting heathland specialists like common lizard, black mining bees and, if we're lucky, birds like nightjars. When the trail is ready, our visitors will be able to see parts of this restoration in progress.

Wetlands improvements

We have also finished improving ditches and backwaters for water voles at Wilden Marsh. Hit hard by habitat loss and predation by non-native mink, which have colonised our water courses, we have had reports of water vole still present at Wilden. By creating more suitable banks and side channels we aim to create a more resilient habitat for this remnant population and hopefully allow it to grow and expand into other areas.

While on wetlands, we are also pleased to have completed renovations on the pond at the entrance garden at The Knapp and Papermill thanks to funding from the Natural Networks project (see pages 4-7). The pond had become overgrown and no longer held water but has been transformed into two pools fed by water off the roof of our education centre and with a range of native wetland plants added around the margins. With additional

funding from the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and DEFRA we have also improved the access track and created a viewing area for the pond. We were very pleased to find smooth newts had colonised the pond within a week of finishing the work; a small wildlife success story!

Woodland works

Following forestry work at Tiddesley Wood, we have plans for tree planting to include diversifying the mix to include species that are more adaptable to a warming climate. Woodland management is a long-term game requiring planning decades in advance, so it is important we start to think now about climate adaptation in any replanting we undertake. Likewise, we are also planting up small areas of Hill Court Farm adjacent to existing strips of woodland, buffering current woodland habitat but also taking first steps in land management to absorb carbon without having a negative impact on existing biodiversity. We continue to manage the northern parts of Hill Court for its wet grassland and wetland bird value and will integrate the areas of planting into our current grazing regime. For anyone interested in helping out, we are always looking for more volunteers, particularly anyone interested in becoming cattle checkers.

Amazing volunteers

As always, volunteers remain essential to our reserves management and in some places we are still picking up the pieces after Covid-19. We have just recruited a new volunteer leader for our Windmill Hill reserve, a wonderful calcareous bank near Evesham, and we are very keen to build up volunteers again after numbers fell during the

pandemic. Get in contact if you'd like to join our refreshed work party at this wonderful place.

We are also rebuilding our work at Droitwich Community Woodlands, 16 hectares of mixed woodland and grassland, right on the edge of the town and managed in partnership with Wychavon District Council. We are very pleased to have restarted work parties there and to have begun school visits to the site as part of our education programme.

Regular readers will know a little about our conservation trainee scheme, delivering practical conservation work on our reserves while giving the skills and experience required to get a first paid job in conservation. Trainees from the last intake have gone on to become a warden for the Malvern Hills Trust, an agricultural advisor for our Severn Trent partnership team and an assistant ecologist for our wildlife consultancy. Congratulations to them, it is very rewarding to be part of their journey.



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



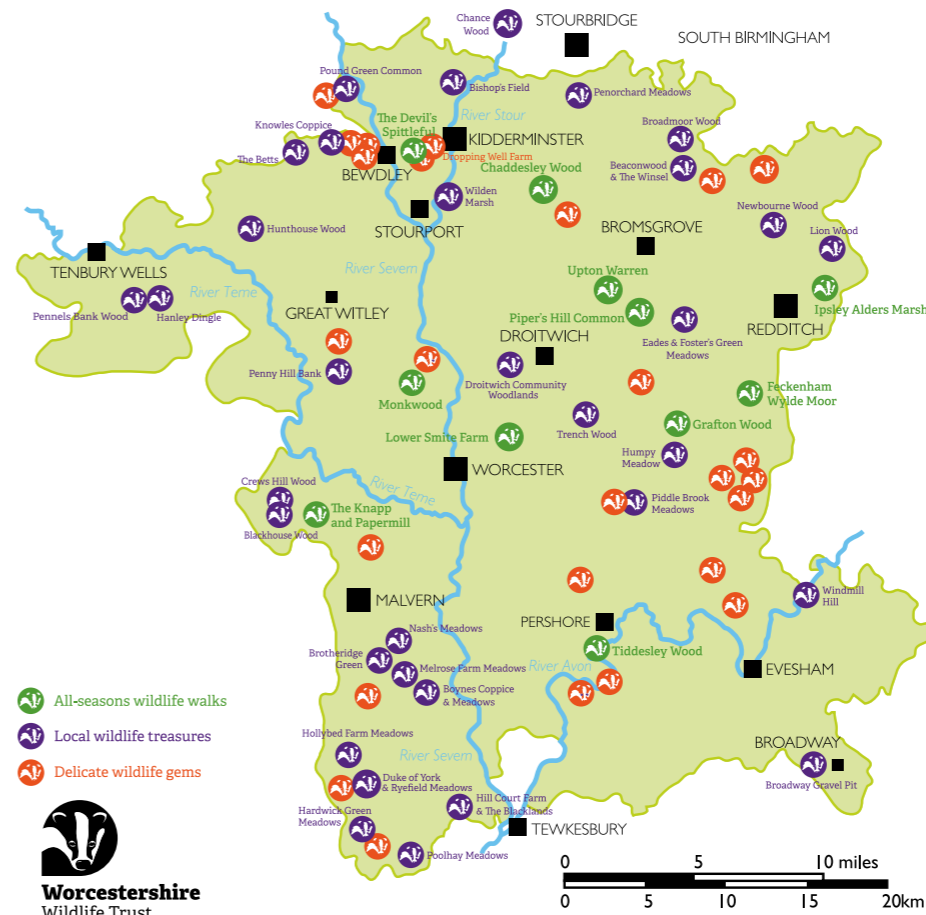
Of the almost 3,500 British plant species, non-native plants now outnumber native species by 51% to 49% as a result of centuries of introductions.



Did you know?

The song of a grasshopper warbler sounds like the reel of a fishing rod spinning?

Amy Lewis



Submit your sightings of wildlife
www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings
 Volunteer with us www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/volunteer

HIGH FIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Photos by: Carl Day, Pete Smith, Pete Walkden, Jack Perks, Ross Hoddinott/2020VISION.



1. Spotted flycatcher in a churchyard.
2. White admiral along a woodland ride.
3. Smooth newt in your local pond.
4. Rudd in your local brook.
5. Heather on a nearby heathland.



Becca Brett

Six places to see dragonflies & damselflies

Dragonflies and damselflies are some of our most enchanting insects. They're large, often colourful and have a fascinating, flickering flight. They dart above the water, starting and stopping like little clockwork toys as they hunt or patrol their territory. Both dragonflies and damselflies belong to an order of insects called Odonata, which means 'toothed jaw' – named for their serrated mandibles. Damselflies are generally slender, with their eyes on either side of the head, never touching. Dragonflies are usually bigger, bulkier and have much larger eyes that normally touch each other. You can find them on all kinds of wetlands, from garden ponds to canals, chalk streams to bogs – and sometimes far from any water. They're best looked for on still, sunny days in spring and summer, when they're warm enough to fly. Here are six of our favourite nature reserves for spotting them:

- 1 Foulshaw Moss, Cumbria Wildlife Trust**
This stunning wetland has been restored for wildlife over recent decades and is now home to many dragonflies and damselflies. You could see emerald damselflies, emperor dragonflies or even the rare white-faced darter – they were reintroduced in 2010 and are now thriving.
Where: Near Witherslack, LA11 6SN
- 2 Carlton Marshes, Suffolk Wildlife Trust**
This nature reserve is a mosaic of marshes, meadows, pools and scrub. An impressive 28 species of dragonfly have been recorded here, more than anywhere else in the UK. This includes the Norfolk hawker – a dazzling dragonfly with emerald eyes.
Where: Lowestoft, NR33 8HU

- 3 Amwell, Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust**
One of the best places in the region to see dragonflies and damselflies, with 21 breeding species, including red-eyed damselflies. The dragonfly trail features a boardwalk for close encounters with these enchanting insects.
Where: Ware, SG12 9SS
- 4 Magor Marsh, Gwent Wildlife Trust**
This beautiful area of fenland in the Gwent Levels is ideal for dragonflies and damselflies, including four-spotted chasers and hairy dragonflies. It's also home to banded demoiselles and ruddy darters, who share the waterways with water voles.
Where: Magor, NP26 3DN

- 5 Higher Hyde Heath, Dorset Wildlife Trust**
Exploring the ponds, woodland and heathland can reward with a variety of species, including downy emeralds and golden-ringed dragonflies – females of which are the longest dragonfly in the UK.
Where: Wareham, BH20 7NY
- 6 Windmill Farm, Cornwall Wildlife Trust**
The ponds of this scenic nature reserve are great for dragonflies and damselflies, including red-veined darters, migrants from continental Europe. Windmill Farm also has a good reputation for attracting rarer migrant visitors, like the lesser emperor.
Where: The Lizard, TR12 7LH



Did you spot any dragons or damsels?

We'd love to know how your search went. Please tweet us your best photos!
[@wildlifetrusts](#)
[@WorcsWT](#)

Four-spotted chaser © Ross Hoddinott/2020VISION

New dragons on the block

Climate change is pushing some species to the edges but, for others, it's providing access to new areas. Worcestershire's recorder of dragonflies and damselflies, Mike Averill, takes a closer look at new arrivals on our patch.

Biological recording can be sketchy; although there is a lot more of it going on than there used to be, some groups have been more popular than others and some remain difficult to identify and record. Dragonflies were poorly recorded in Worcestershire up to the mid-1970s when an impetus was provided with the publication of a new identification book and a push for records to produce a nationwide distribution atlas in 1996.

While the number of records submitted has risen over the years, it is noticeable that the number of species recorded in each period has also risen, particularly since 1992. We have actually had 11 new species arrive in Worcestershire since 1982 (an increase of 50 per cent). At least nine of these species can be attributed to warmer temperatures as they have been pushing north from southeast England. Three are not just new to Worcestershire but are totally new to the UK – lesser emperor *Anax parthenope*, small red-eyed damselfly *Erythromma viridulum* and willow emerald *Chalcolestes viridis*.

Small red-eyed damselflies can be

seen throughout Worcestershire now but lesser emperors are most likely to be seen at Ripple Gravel pits in high summer. Willow emeralds have only been seen at six locations so far, so visit pools with overhanging branches of willow and look for the scars in the bark created by their egg-laying.

In Worcestershire we have not lost any species directly as a result of climate change but in the rest of the UK, some northern latitude species are finding fewer places that they can retreat to. There is evidence from the number of records received that some of our more common species are not dealing with climate change as well so watch this space.



Andy Warr



Andy Warr



Mike Averill

(Left) Lesser emperor first seen in the south of the county and has appeared three years running with proof of breeding.
 (Top) Willow emerald egg laying in to branches that overhang water.
 (Above) Small red-eyed damselflies favour floating vegetation from milfoil to hornwort to algae.

Seen a dragonfly? Take a picture and let us know where and when
www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings
 Discover more about Worcestershire's dragonflies
www.dragonfliesofworcestershire.weebly.com



Mike Averill is long time WWT member, never far from water, loves anything that lives in it.

Worcestershire's beautiful butterflies

Whose heart does not lift on seeing a butterfly flutter by? These magical insects with their amazing life cycle have long held a place in our culture as symbols of freedom, harmony and transformation. They also play an important role as indicators of the health of the environment so, in every way, they are a precious part of our lives. Here are nine butterflies to enjoy looking for, including a challenging one or two. There are 59 species throughout the UK so do look out for them whilst on your travels, not least because they will lead you to beautiful places on warm and sunny days!



Sandra Young.
WWT trustee who does everything she can to help wildlife on her doorstep.



Brimstone

The wide-ranging brimstone hibernates as an adult so is one of our first butterflies to appear each year. The bright yellow wings of a patrolling male, the original 'butter-coloured fly', joyfully signal the end of winter. The female is a pale greenish-white and both sexes have angular shaped wings that resemble leaves when closed. The main foodplant is alder buckthorn and a new generation is on the wing by mid-July.



Peacock

The colourful peacock will flash its wings at potential predators, using those large eyespots as a deterrent. By contrast, the nearly black underside of the wings provides camouflage. Overwintering as adults, they can be spotted on the wing early in the year, with the majority emerging from late March. A new generation appears in mid-July; look for it on buddleia, one of its favourite flowers.



Speckled wood

The wings of the speckled wood, chocolate-brown with creamy yellow spots, echo the sun-dappled glades and woodland edges it likes to frequent. It is unique amongst UK butterflies for being able to hibernate both as a caterpillar and a chrysalis. The resulting two spring flight periods, both producing one or two later broods, means that this butterfly can be spotted from March right through to October or even November.



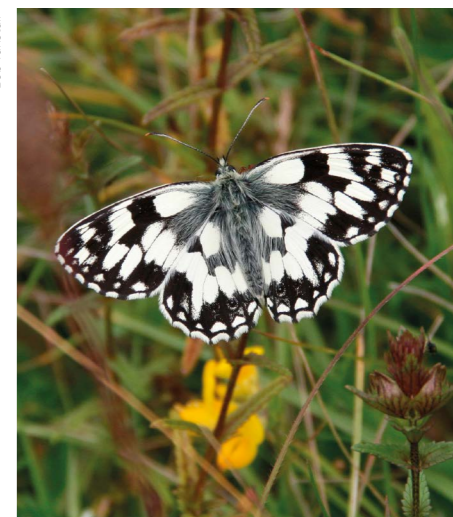
Holly blue

The holly blue looks like a tiny fragment of summer sky. The underside of the wings is a pale silvery blue with black dots and the female has black margins on her forewings. It's the earliest blue on the wing and produces two generations. Holly is the main foodplant of the first brood but for the second it is ivy. Look from April to September in churchyards, gardens, parks and hedgerows.



Painted lady

The pretty painted lady migrates all the way from North Africa to reach our shores in May and June. In good years it can be found almost anywhere but favours open areas of thistles for breeding. Successive generations return south each autumn, making the journey at high altitude at speeds of up to 30mph. What an amazing feat for a fragile butterfly weighing less than a gramme!



Marbled white

The strikingly patterned marbled white lays its eggs amongst tall grasses and hibernates as a caterpillar. Its single brood is on the wing from June and it can often be found in large numbers on species-rich grassland, roadside verges and railway embankments. It loves basking on grass-heads and flowers and is particularly attracted to purple flowers such as field scabious and common knapweed.



Ringlet

The ringlet is named after the small yellow-ringed eyespots on its velvety dark brown, white-fringed wings. Freshly emerged males look almost black but fade over time. Look for it from June to August nectaring on bramble and thistle flowers along damp woodland rides and in areas of rough grassland and scrub where it lives in large groups. It likes shady conditions and will continue to fly in light rain.



Silver-washed fritillary

Look for the splendid silver-washed fritillary between June and September in woodlands. It is our largest fritillary, with rich orange-brown wings and black markings that differ slightly between the sexes. The underside hindwing has subtle silver streaks (washes). It has a fast, gliding flight – you may be lucky and spot the male pursuing the female, circling and wafting her with pheromones in courtship display.



Brown hairstreak

The rare brown hairstreak presents a challenge even in its strongholds. The flight period is from late July to October but males congregate high up in the canopy so you are more likely to spot a female dispersing to lay her eggs on blackthorn. Both sexes have dark-chocolate upper wings with orange 'tails' and the female has orange splashes on her forewings. The orangey underside has white hairstreak lines.

Wildlife superstars

Each year the Trust celebrates 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** recognise outstanding voluntary service to the Trust. This year we have also appointed a President and two Vice Presidents.



Worcestershire Wildlife Medal

Gary Farmer

Gary is immersed in the county's natural world and he is undoubtedly one of Worcestershire's leading naturalists and conservationists.

As a naturalist he specialises in invertebrates, having authored a book titled *Worcestershire's Orthoptera*, published by Worcestershire Recorders,

and is county expert for woodlice and millipedes, with a fascination for weevils. However, Gary's knowledge is very broad: he has undertaken BTO bird surveys and is a keen botanist, having collected wildflower seed from around Worcestershire for Kew Gardens' Millennium Seed Bank project. He is a very active member of Worcestershire Recorders, the Wyre Forest Study Group, Worcestershire Biological Records Centre and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. Gary has contributed chapters to several other natural history books.

Not only an enthusiastic observer and recorder of wildlife, he shares his passion for this with many people, encouraging them to find their own confidence in connecting with nature through his many talks, walks, ID courses and lectures. His career has involved inspiring communities about wildlife as a ranger for Solihull

Metropolitan Borough Council and, currently, as manager of Vale Landscape Heritage Trust, looking after many nature reserves in the south of the county.

Gary and his wife Nicki have worked as a team in many areas. They have created a fantastic garden for wildlife and they make sure to consider different species in how they manage it. Nicki accompanies Gary on recording adventures and often finds rare wildlife to challenge his identification and recording skills. They are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about wildlife and invite others to share in this interest through both their careers and personal lives. As core members of the Worcestershire Recorders and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's Redditch Local Group, they contribute greatly to the understanding of wildlife in the county.



Madi Farmer



Sandra Young



Tony and Celia Barnby

Committee members of Droitwich Local Group event support at Lower Smite Farm.

Chris and Irene Blake

Dedicated volunteers at The Knapp and Papermill.

Tony Burbery

An integral member of Upton Warren's volunteers.

John and Debbie Burton

Dedicated volunteers at The Knapp and Papermill.

Vanessa Chaplin

A stalwart of the Monkwood work parties and roving volunteer group.

John Everard

Led weekly work parties at Feckenham Wylde Moor for the past seven years.

Terry Green

Brings the wonder of the natural world alive for children and delivers WWT school assemblies.

Sue and Mike Jenkins

Leaders of the Droitwich Local Group committee and event support at Lower Smite Farm.

Isabel Jones

An enthusiastic volunteer at Hollybed Farm Meadows and Hill Court Farm.

Val Layfield

SE Worcestershire Local Group committee member, Tiddesley Wood log sales, noble chafer surveying and orchard management.

Charles Lewis

An integral member of Upton Warren's volunteers.

Janet Morris

SE Worcestershire Local Group committee member, Tiddesley Wood log sales, noble chafer surveying and orchard management.

Poppy Morris

Volunteer at Jim's Wood and many years as a Worcester Local Group committee member.

Bob Oakley

An integral member of Upton Warren's volunteers.

Elizabeth Plimley

Has led the Hunthouse Wood dormouse surveying team for more than 10 years.

Mark Preston

A stalwart of the Tuesday roving volunteer group.

Sheena Ramsey

A committee member and bird food seller with Redditch Local Group.

John Ravenscroft

Long-term volunteer at Tiddesley Wood Open Days, log sales and orchard management.

Danielle Revill

Long-term volunteer at Tiddesley Wood Open Days and log sales.

Anne Roberts

Committee member of Droitwich Local Group and event support at Lower Smite Farm.

Richard Stanley

Long-term volunteer at Tiddesley Wood Open Days, log sales and orchard management.

Grahame Terry

Long-term volunteer at Tiddesley Wood Open Days, log sales and orchard management.

Jenny Tonry

An integral member of Feckenham Wylde Moor's volunteers.

John de Torre

Committee member of Droitwich Local Group and event support at Lower Smite Farm.

Paul Wearing

Long-term volunteer at Tiddesley Wood log sales.

John Williams

Long-term volunteer at Tiddesley Wood Open Days, log sales and orchard management.

Sue Woods

Long-term volunteer at Tiddesley Wood Open Days and log sales.

Sean Young

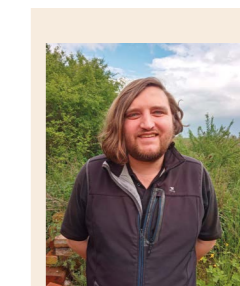
Long-term volunteer at Tiddesley Wood Open Days and orchard management.

Presidency

Awarded to Harry Green (G. H. Green MBE) who has made a unique and unrivalled contribution to the Trust's work over more than six decades.

Vice-Presidency

Awarded to Mervyn Needham BEM and Roger Pannell, both have given long service as trustees, Honorary Officers, in Local Groups and on Trust nature reserves.



If you would like to become a volunteer with us please contact Joe Gillard, our Volunteer Development

Officer, on joe@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org or take a look at www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/volunteer

Joe leads on volunteer recruitment and development for the Trust. We have more than 500 volunteers helping wildlife in a wide range of roles. Volunteers and the many things they do are essential and integral cogs in the wheels of nature's recovery.

Wild notebook



All photographs by Rosemary Winnall



Peacock butterfly

What a joy to spot this newly emerged butterfly sunning itself in my garden! In late summer, when flower nectar is prolific, they will feed up to lay down body fats in order to survive winter hibernation. As they open their wings the sudden flashing of the colourful 'eyes' have been seen to frighten blue tits. They can even make a hissing noise by rubbing parts of its wings together. Even the caterpillars have an effective deterrent against predators as they can regurgitate their stomach contents over their attacker.

Lesser bulin *Merdigera obscura*

Close examination of cracks in oak bark provides a record of these camouflaged adult and juvenile snails. *Merdigera* means 'excrement-bearer' and they cover their shells in droppings, dirt and algae, which makes them hard to spot. They are also found on walls and in leaf litter.



Common male-fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*

A peep on the underside of fronds in late summer will reveal ripe split sori, their membranes shrivelled to reveal black sporangia containing the spores – one feature to help identify this species. Male-ferns were originally named as they looked more robust and vigorous than the lady-fern *Athyrium filix-femina!*



Harvestman *Opilio canestrinii*

I'd been on the look-out for this invasive harvestman and then I discovered it in my local park. It was first seen in Essex in 1991 and has spread quickly, perhaps replacing our native species. It's found around human habitation and its orange leg bases provide a clue to its identification.

Banded centipede *Lithobius variegatus*

This centipede with its large poison claws, is identified by alternating dark and light bands round its legs, easily seen on the longer rear ones. It is a predator that hunts at night, hiding under stones and logs in the daytime and is only found in rural areas.



Green elfcups *Chlorociboria aeruginascens*

We often see turquoise staining in small dead oak branches that have lost their bark but the fruiting bodies are not so common. This fungus used to be inoculated into oak to make a veneer for marquetry and inlaid wood, called Tunbridge Ware, until the last company closed in 1927.



Wild arum fruits *Arum maculatum*

Lords-and-ladies, cuckoopint, Jack-in-the-pulpit are other names for this woodland shade-lover. Pollination by tiny flies attracted to the flower's fetid smell have resulted in these fruits, which have turned from green to orange to bright red. They are poisonous to humans and most animals but birds seem able to eat them.

Common field grasshopper *Chorthippus brunneus*

On bare stony ground, I hear the distinctive short regular chirps of this stridulating grasshopper that rubs tiny pegs on its femur against a raised vein on the edge of its forewing. It is densely hairy under the thorax, is often brown with some orange underneath and can fly well.



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

Lovely lapwings

Words: **Eleanor Reast**

Photo: **Mark Hamblin/2020VISION**

A very big thank you to everyone who generously donated money to help with the large-scale repairs to one of Upton Warren's best-loved hides. With your help and support, emergency work to the lapwing hide at The Moors was completed just in time for nesting season.

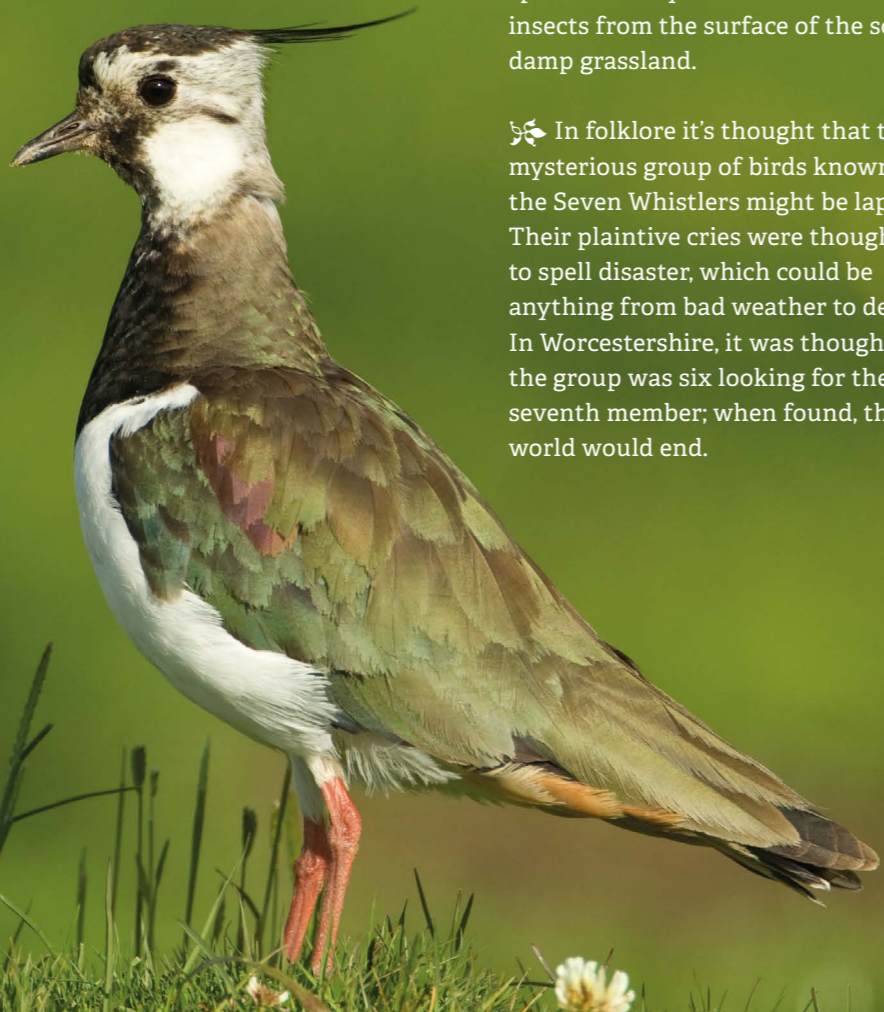
As its name suggests, the lapwing hide is a great place to view lapwing from, especially over autumn and winter. These crested plovers with a glossy, iridescent plumage are a favourite of many Trust members but did you know:

🦋 Vernacular names include peewit and teewhupp after the display call. 'Flopwing' illustrates the characteristic floppy flight using its unusually broad wings.

🦋 Males perform their tumbling, aerial acrobatics to attract females and ward off rivals.

🦋 Our longhorn cattle graze the grassland at Upton Warren to create the open, short-turfed areas that lapwing need to nest in.

🦋 They lay a clutch of four highly camouflaged eggs in just a scrape on the ground, which makes the eggs and chicks very vulnerable to predation.



🦋 Parent birds lure predators away from the nest by dragging their wings, pretending to be injured. As such, the collective noun for lapwings is a 'deceit'.

🦋 Over autumn and winter lapwing can be seen in large flocks over farmland. They especially like to congregate on ploughed fields, feasting on worms brought up by the plough. They also eat woodlice and spiders so only need a short bill to pick insects from the surface of the soil or damp grassland.

🦋 In folklore it's thought that the mysterious group of birds known as the Seven Whistlers might be lapwing. Their plaintive cries were thought to spell disaster, which could be anything from bad weather to death. In Worcestershire, it was thought that the group was six looking for their seventh member; when found, the world would end.

Seasonal pickings

When it comes to engaging with visitors on our nature reserves, and I'm sure the volunteer engagement wardens would agree, there can't really be any period that beats spring. This year there was so much to see and hear. Male songbirds were in fine voice as the breeding season got into full flow with our resident bird populations being boosted by a varied group of migrants from Africa. A succession of flora and invertebrates emerged and provided a wide variety of interest to point out or, just simply, to enjoy.

Can anything match this?

Yes! July and August are almost as interesting especially if, like me, you have a fondness for butterflies. Summer is the time to see the largest amount of different species and they are so

easy to observe. Visit our woodlands and you'll quickly appreciate how well our practical conservation teams have created fantastic habitat for butterflies, and other invertebrates, alongside the footpaths.

With songbirds mostly silent, as they moult to replace feathers worn out by the demands of raising chicks, it is at this time of year that I spend more time focussing on the wildlife of this managed edge habitat. It is by far the most productive area of any woodland.

You're probably already familiar with common butterfly species like the peacock, red admiral, brimstone and small tortoiseshell. But the Trust is also lucky to maintain populations of less common species such as the wood white, a small, delicate butterfly that looks like it would struggle to fly more than 10 metres but which is well established on a few of our reserves.

I always look forward to seeing

the larger 'gliders'; the silver-washed fritillary, white admiral and purple emperor. Then there are the much smaller hairstreaks; the purple, white-letter and the more locally distributed brown hairstreak.

My favourites are undoubtedly the common blue and brown argus. Separating the argus from the extremely similar female common blue is one of the nicer challenges that never gets tedious and is another one of those rewarding moments when you get to show a visitor something they've never thought about or recognised before.



Ion Riley, WWT Community Wildlife Warden. A lifelong birdwatcher with a recent interest in butterflies

Top Tip

Photography and wildlife watching are rewarding hobbies but please do them responsibly. Wildlife will thank you for not leaving footpaths or entering Wildlife Only areas to look for or follow subjects. Designated paths and tracks will guide you around a site, giving wildlife plenty of space to feed and rest.



If you would like to help our visitors appreciate the beauty of our reserves and their importance towards combatting today's wildlife decline, please consider becoming a Volunteer Engagement Warden.

www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/volunteering-opportunities

Email us volunteer@worcestershirewildliferust.org to arrange a chat about volunteering.



Gourmet gardening for wildlife

Grow a garden full of food that both you and your wild neighbours can enjoy.

Traditionally, fruit and veg growers view wildlife as something that should be prevented from eating the food we grow for ourselves. We net berries to protect them from birds, remove 'cabbage white' caterpillars from our brassicas. We lay traps for things like earwigs and expose soil grubs so that birds might feast on them before they can do any damage. Some growers haven't got the memo about insect declines and still use harmful bug sprays.

What if we learned to share or even deliberately planted crops that could be used by us and wildlife? I realise I may be in the minority here but one of my favourite things about growing food is sharing it. I'm happy to share my soft fruit with the birds – my cherry trees produce more than I would know what to do with and there are enough

blackberries, raspberries and tayberries to go around. I laugh at the caterpillars eating my brassicas and I always leave some to flower, along with some 'spare' parsnips and onions, so there's food for pollinators in spring. If I cut only half of my herbs such as mint, oregano, chives and thyme, I can encourage flowers to grow for bees and butterflies. If I avoid cutting back the mildewed leaves of my courgettes I provide food for 22-spot ladybirds.

There is a line between providing food for wildlife and having your crop destroyed; only you can decide where that line sits. For me, there's not really a line. I'm happy for other species to enjoy the food I grow and I go out of my way to provide a little bit more for them. I may have a reduced crop but I never lose a crop – one of the great things about gardening for wildlife is knowing the ecosystem will take care of itself. This means there's always something for everyone.



Nasturtiums

Sow from spring to summer for a crop of fiery leaves and sweet flowers. Leave a crop for 'cabbage white' butterflies to feast on – you can move caterpillars from brassicas onto nasturtium leaves to protect them.

Get more tips for helping nature at home from [wildlifetrusts.org/gardening](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/gardening)



Oregano

Plant from spring to autumn in pots or the ground. Leave some unharvested so it flowers for butterflies and bees.



Rosemary

Flowering in spring, rosemary provides nectar and pollen for queen bumblebees. Plant at any time of year in moist but well-drained soil.



Carrots

Sow direct in pots or the ground from spring to late summer. Leave some to flower for pollinators.



Courgettes

Buy ready-grown plants and plant into rich soil in early summer, and keep well watered. 22-spot ladybirds are very polite, leaving the fruit for you and eating only the leaf mildew.



Raspberries

Buy canes in spring or autumn and plant in rich, moist soil. The blackbirds will leave you some, I promise!



Brassicas

Varieties like broccoli and kale will flower after harvesting, providing food for early spring mining bees. Many varieties can be sown or planted out in summer – plant in rich soil and firm well.

Broad beans

Avoid removing aphids and you'll provide food not just for them but for the ladybirds, lacewings and hoverfly larva that eat them. Sow direct in autumn or spring. Stake taller varieties.



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

Illustrations by Hannah Bailey;
Kate Bradbury photograph © Sarah Cuttle



Wild captures

We had a bumper number of entries to this year's photography competition with over 400 images submitted by nearly 100 photographers. Thank you to everyone who entered and gave our judges a very hard time!

Congratulations to the winners and runners-up.

Four photos faced a public vote to win a place on the front of our 2024 calendar. Congratulations to Mark Everett whose fabulous kingfisher has become this year's overall winner.

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

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.

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

Our winners are:



January: David Meredith



February: Paul Lloyd



March: John Kirk



April: Ric Harding



May: Robin Couchman



June: Jenny Farmer



July: Amy Marsh



August: Cathryn Dhonau



September: Mark Everett



October: Jenny Farmer



November: Peter Pipkin



December: Chris Farman



Rainbow of flowers

Aerial pictures of England's green and pleasant land show a mosaic of fields separated by hedges and everywhere is green. Older pictures show smaller fields but if you zoom in, those old fields are multicoloured – pastures full of flowers and cultivated fields with colourful weeds, all buzzing with huge numbers of insects. Today's green is mostly grass or crops; there are few flowers except in a few special places.

Colour abounded in the countryside of my boyhood; I could easily find 100 wildflowers in a 1940s Cotswold village. Intensive agriculture, weed killers, development, climate change, un-enforced protections . . . we've broken the rainbow. Can you help to mend it in your patch?



Poppy

Common poppies are annual flowers of arable fields and disturbed open habitats.

The seeds are long lived and deep soil disturbance after many years of dormancy can bring seeds to the top, providing an unexpected mass flowering. However, the sight of a corn field turned red by poppies is now much rarer than it was 100 years ago because of the increased use of herbicides.



Fox and cubs

Fox and cubs is so named because the deep orange open flowers (fox) show alongside the flower buds (cubs). It has been grown in gardens since the 1600s and has often escaped to grow in mown grassland on roadsides and in churchyards. Some regard it as a symbol of protection and plant it to keep them safe from harm. It is a winter-green perennial herb with vigorous stolons (runners).



Dandelion

These bright yellow flowers are a spring delight and most of us have blown seeds from a dandelion clock. The jagged leaf edges give the name *dent de lion*, French for 'tooth of the lion'. Common and most abundant in disturbed, grassy habitats – verges, lawns, paths, gardens and waste ground – dandelions are a group of 250 microspecies, some of which are rare and of special habitats that can be unwittingly exterminated.



Herb paris

This paris is a translation of the apothecaries' herba paris, 'pair herb', describing the equality of its parts that are twice everything! Its other name, true lover's knot, is derived from these interlocking loops. A perennial herb of ancient woodland, it flowers and fruits in June and July, thriving in the early stages of traditional coppicing and persisting in deep shade. Populations have declined with the loss of coppicing and increase in conifer plantations.



Forget-me-not

Forget-me-nots symbolise true love and respect; give these tiny blooms to someone as a promise that you will always remember them. These blue flowers are an annual or biennial of open or disturbed ground, especially cultivated fields but also woodland edges, grassland, hedges, scrub, roadsides, walls and quarries. The distribution of forget-me-nots has remained stable due, in part, to its flexibility and long-lived seed.



Harebell

The violet-coloured bells of these delicate flowers appear as if by magic in late summer and into autumn; until open, they are almost invisible with small rosettes of thin, wiry stems that carry clusters of two to six flower bells. A plant of dry, open, infertile grasslands they have declined through habitat loss, agricultural improvement and reduced grazing of favoured pastures.



Columbine

The columbine is a 'nothing ventured, nothing gained' type of flower, able to grow in a range of tough conditions. A common garden plant of many colours, the blue/indigo-flowered form growing in the wild is accepted as a true native. Garden escapes of many colours, however, are widely naturalised in quarries, on roadsides, railway banks, old walls and in a wide range of disturbed habitats.



Harry Green.

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

Flowers used:
 Poppy: Gemma de Gouveia, Paul Lane; Fox and cubs: Amy Lewis, Vaughn Matthews; Dandelion: Carl Graef, Wendy Carter; Herb Paris: Wendy Carter, Vaughn Matthews; Forget-me-nots: Anne Williams, Vaughn Matthews; Columbine: Kevin McGee; Harebell: Amy Lewis, Philip Precey, Rosemary Winnall.
 Landscape: Romsley Manor Farm Meadows, Michael Liley.
 Design: Aspect Design

Yellow Slug-marine

Sea slugs add a spectacular splash of colour to our rockpools.

Delicate, vibrant, enchanting; these might not be words you normally associate with slugs but sea slugs have no respect for normal. There are several groups that you may come across on UK shores and even the most familiar looking of these, the sea hares, are quirky. These plump brown slugs have tall ear-like rhinophores (scent-sensitive tentacles) and a hidden shell. They lay a tangle of eggs that resemble pink spaghetti and produce a 'smoke-screen' of violet ink if disturbed. The solar powered sea slug, on the other hand, belongs to the sap-suckers group. It eats seaweed, retaining the photosynthesising parts – the chloroplasts – in its body, where they supplement the slug's diet with sugars, like a built-in snack bar.

The largest group of sea slugs, the nudibranchs, are the strangest and most visually stunning of all. With dozens of species to be found in our rock pools and shallow seas, they have become my delight and obsession.



Clockwise from left: Polycera quadrilobata © Dan Bolt; Aeolidia papillirostris © Alex Mustard; Polycera quadrilobata © Alex Mustard; Polycera quadrilobata © Alex Mustard; Naturepl



Gills and frills

Nudibranchs, or 'nudis', as they are affectionately known by their ever-growing fan club, are shell-less sea slugs. Their name comes from the Latin, nudus branchia, meaning 'naked gill'. Nudibranchs are a flamboyant bunch, so they turn their gills into stylish accessories.

One of our most common rocky shore nudibranchs, the sea lemon (*Doris pseudoargus*), is a case in point. When underwater, this bumpy yellow animal unfurls a glamorous, feathery circle of honey-yellow gills on its back. Other nudibranchs, like the bright purple *Edmundsella pedata*, have spiky projections called 'cerata', providing a large surface area through which they breathe in oxygen.

Tiny *Doto* spp. slugs win my prize for the craziest body shape. Their white cerata, shaped like towering jelly moulds adorned with cherry-red spots, are so high that they wobble precariously. Their heads sport two tall rhinophores sheathed in a wide dish,



as though they are trying to detect alien radio signals. *Amphorina* spp. slugs inflate and deflate their cerata, *Facelina* spp. have ringed rhinophores like unicorn horns, while *Polycera* spp. slugs' heads are fringed with colourful tentacles. Anything goes when you're a nudibranch.

You are what you eat

If you are used to peaceable garden slugs, it can be unsettling to discover that nudibranchs are devout carnivores. While each species has a preferred diet, between them they eat sponges, barnacles, hydroids, anemones, bryozoans, sea squirts and more.

Some nudibranchs change colour. The sea lemon, for instance, turns into a 'sea orange' after eating orange sponges. Great grey sea slugs (*Aeolidia* spp.) dive in headfirst to feed among the treacherous stinging tentacles of anemones, their pale grey bodies and cerata often turning bright pink as they eat. Inside their cerata, great grey slugs retain the anemone's stinging cells, which fire toxic harpoons at any predator that tries to bite them. Other slugs, like *Geitodoris planata*, have acid glands that burn attackers.

Most incredible of all are the *Calma* slugs. The vivid blue and yellow *Calma glaucooides* feeds on clingfish eggs, while its relation, *Calma gobiophaga* has cerata the shape of goby eggs, allowing it to evade the male goby's efforts to guard its brood. The fish eggs are so efficiently digested that *Calma* slugs have no anus and never poo.

Slug safari

For the best chance of finding sea slugs, join an organised event or Shoresearch survey, where experts will be on hand to help you discover more. Look for pale spirals of sea slug spawn on rocks and seaweeds in spring and summer. Sea slugs are hermaphrodites, meaning that they are both male and female at once, so they all lay eggs.



Nudibranchs are often found on their favourite foods, but even the brightest slugs can be well camouflaged. If possible, place your nudibranch in water and watch it magically puff up. Be gentle as sea slugs are delicate. Always put the nudibranch back where it came from, leave everything as you found it and watch the tides.

Finding your first nudibranch is like discovering a sparkling gem. Their exquisite colours and eye-catching shapes make them true treasures of the rock pools.



Heather Buttivant is a Cornwall Wildlife Trust volunteer, proud 'nudi' fanatic and author of the award-winning blog, cornishrockpools.com. She has published two books: *Rock Pool* and *Beach Explorer*.

From beyond the brink



Kirsty CrowArtist Yeomans

Reintroduction is a hot topic in conservation. It's essentially bringing a species back to an area from which it has been lost. In my opinion, reintroduction should be a last resort. We should be working hard to hold on to what we've got without letting it get to that stage. We should have a government doing an awful lot more to stop wildlife from being lost and to help threatened species recover.

But our wildlife is in a sorry state. It's been said many times that we are one of the most nature depleted countries in the world – when I look around now and think about what we've lost since I was a young lad walking the fields of mid Wales, I can believe it. Curlews, lapwings, yellowhammers, linnets; pools full of frogs, toads, and newts – so many have now disappeared. It's not too late to save these species but for others, last resorts are all we have left.

Where species have gone extinct from an area because of human activity, I think reintroducing them is very much justified. Especially so when species have a hugely positive impact on the environment, bringing benefits for a whole host of other plants and animals. Take beavers, for example. They create and maintain incredible wetland habitats, providing ideal conditions for many species, from water plants to amphibians to fish. This habitat creation is more important than ever as hot, dry summers become more frequent.

Thanks to reintroductions, there are now wild beavers back in Scotland, with a few in England too. But Wales is lagging behind. Beavers are back in Wales but legally only in enclosures. I was privileged

enough to be there when they arrived. It was an amazing feeling to be a small part of this event but imagine how much better it would be to see them in the wild.

I've been quite shocked at the opposition to reintroducing beavers. I think a lot of it comes from a lack of understanding of beaver behaviour and how many benefits they bring. Yes, there may be one or two areas of conflict but there are plenty of measures to mitigate this. It's already been done successfully in countries across Europe, where people now live happily alongside beavers. Any mention of reintroducing lynx raises even more opposition in some places but I also think there's a place for lynx in the UK. We have big problems with overgrazing as a result of high deer populations and lynx could help with that. I'd be very interested to see them return and what effect they would have.

I'm obviously concerned about wildlife across the whole of the UK but as a Welshman what I would really love to see is the reintroduction of both beavers and golden eagles to Wales. We had an escaped golden eagle set up home here for over 10 years and it had a fantastic reception from the local community, including farmers. Some were overawed by the beauty and the sheer size of her. It would be fantastic to see golden eagles back in Wales for good.

Find out all about Wildlife Trust reintroduction projects: wildlifetrusts.org/reintroductionswildlifetrusts.org/wild-daffodils

Iolo Williams



Iolo Williams is a Welsh ornithologist, conservationist and popular wildlife presenter, known for programmes including BBC's *Springwatch* and *Wild Wales*. He has been supportive of the Wildlife Trusts for a long time and in 2021 took on the role of vice president of The Wildlife Trusts.

@IoloWilliams2

TRIED AND TRUSTED

The Wildlife Trusts have been involved in many successful reintroduction projects across the UK, including the return of beavers. We've also helped bring back water voles, pine martens, dragonflies, and butterflies to parts of the UK from which they've been lost.

Your letters

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



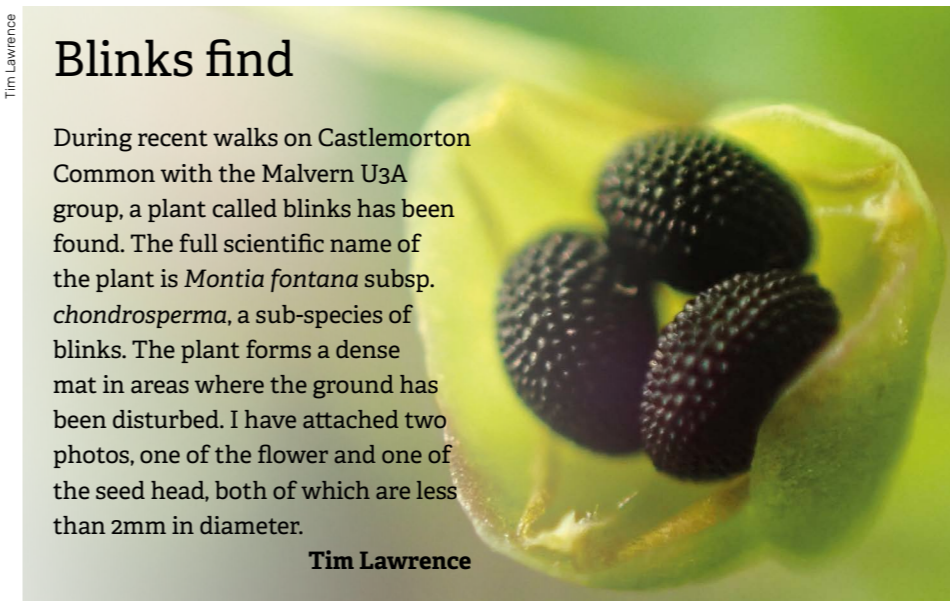
Helen Ward

Grass snake spotted

Just to register this find – was clearing out dead leaves behind my back door. I presume there are many around Wyre but thought you'd like to know.

Helen Ward

Ed. Yes, grass snakes are quite widespread across the county and Wyre Forest but they're not often spotted so it's good to know of sightings. The young hatch in late August/September and then overwinter as youngsters; it's probably not too long since this one woke up from its winter slumber.



Tim Lawrence

Blinks find

During recent walks on Castlemorton Common with the Malvern U3A group, a plant called blinks has been found. The full scientific name of the plant is *Montia fontana* subsp. *chondrosperma*, a sub-species of blinks. The plant forms a dense mat in areas where the ground has been disturbed. I have attached two photos, one of the flower and one of the seed head, both of which are less than 2mm in diameter.

Tim Lawrence

Beautiful flowers

I was at Eades Meadow a couple of times last week and it is absolutely splendid. Best I have ever seen it.

Robin Couchman



Robin Couchman

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Social feeds



John Belsey

It's been 20 years since avocet 1st bred at Flashes #uptonwarren but in that time we have had very few ringed birds. However @andypitt21 saw ER2787_left leg red over yellow, right leg yellow over metal. How long do they live for? Answer – this one is nearly 33 YEARS OLD!

@Upstarts1979



Ian Bamforth

Here we go again!

Ian Bamforth



Kel Thomas

This little wren was busy nest building in the garden yesterday.

Kel Thomas



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Our huge thanks to all of the above for their support! If you would like to become a stockist, please contact Tonia via tonia@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org

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