



Welcome

The State of Nature 2023 report tracked more than 10,000 species and compared these to levels in 1970. It shows:

- One in six species is at risk of being lost from Great Britain.
- Overall abundance of all species has, on average, declined by 19%.
- Most important habitats are in poor condition, though restoration projects have clear benefits for nature, people and adapting to climate change.

These figures only serve to confirm our worst fears; nature is in crisis.

We know how to help nature recover. When I moved to Worcestershire in the 1980s otters were extinct here and seeing a buzzard was a rare treat; now they are thriving. Many species that are now threatened, however, were widespread then – adders, nightingales, turtle doves and eels to name a few.

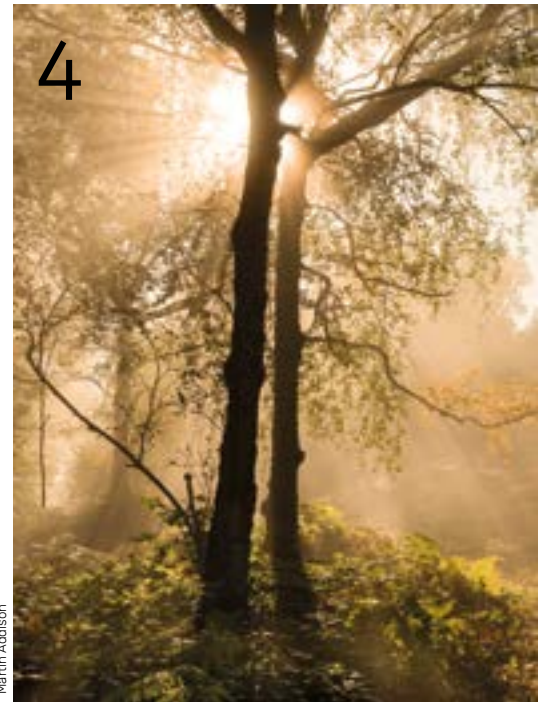
A general election approaches and whichever party forms the next UK Government, they must make it a priority to tackle the nature and climate crises.

Here are couple of current case studies that sum up the challenges and the solutions:

- You'll read more on page 16 about a proposal for 300 homes immediately adjacent to Tiddesley Wood, one of most cherished nature reserves. Avoiding development here is essential for the wood's long-term future. We very much hope that the strength of argument against development here will dissuade the developers from putting in a planning application but if they do, we will be responding with a resounding 'no'.
- The Trust is leading a partnership of nine Wildlife Trusts and other environmental bodies to ramp up action to combat the nature crisis across the whole of the Severn and Wye river catchments. This long-term approach will build on existing initiatives by providing advice and securing funding for landowners, which can only be delivered at scale through collaboration. It has been made possible by funding from the Ecological Restoration Fund, as part of a £6 million investment in Wildlife Trust initiatives.

More info <https://bit.ly/SoN23WWT>

Colin Raven, Director



Martin Addison

4



Pete Walkden

28

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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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Chair: Christianne Tipping

Vice Chair: David Mortiboys

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Paul Lane



Matthew Roberts

Contents

Our wild treescapes	4
Local news	10
UK news	13
Worcestershire's nature reserves	14
Worcestershire's bountiful berries	18
Dancing through the treetops	20
UK: Six places to see trees	23
Wild notebook	24
Nature's cathedrals	26
Seasonal pickings	28
Worcestershire trees	29
Tree-mendous connections	30
UK: Saving water for wildlife	32
Photo competition	34
Your letters	35

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** treescapes

Thanks to you
We're increasing
tree cover across
Worcestershire



Look across Worcestershire from high on the Malverns, Clent or the Cotswold scarp and you can see field parcels neatly laid out among their hedge network; descend again and that mosaic of boundaries coalesces into rank upon rank of leafy green, giving an enclosed and very 'treed' feel to much of the county.

Whether they rise above your street, sit as majestic veterans in stately parklands like Croome and Spetchley, drip with mosses and lichens in the northern and western dingles or

soar in the iconic forests of Wyre and Feckenham, trees are a ubiquitous source of joy and a backdrop to daily life in Worcestershire. Despite the deserved fame of places like Wyre, though, many of those trees aren't in woodlands at all, they are in the hedges that edge our fields and mark out our road and rail corridors. In some senses these trees may be the most important in defining our landscape and making space for nature, in towns and the countryside.

That network of trees is vital for wildlife and key to management of air

and water quality, agricultural wellbeing and aesthetic enjoyment. Culturally, trees have played a fundamental role in our history with a legacy of spectacular isolated specimens, orchards and field boundaries for us to admire because our predecessors had an economic use for them. Maintaining that resource and re-linking the fragmented woodland elements is a vital part of the Trust's work and, as you'll see in the following pages, opportunities are varied and complicated but incredibly exciting!





Paul Lane

Estimates vary as to how much the ancient 'wildwood' ever had a completely closed canopy but there was certainly some open space for most of the time; large grazing animals, fires and storms would have seen to that. Human activity has also played a considerable role in the woodland losses seen over the last few millennia.

The Evesham vale with its rich, light, workable soil was cleared early; by Roman times it was already important for growing cereals and so has relatively few ancient woodlands today. Fields there are larger and many hedges date from the parliamentary enclosures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By contrast, the north and west of the county, especially west of the Severn, have heavier soils and are harder to farm. Here, the 'wildwood' persisted longer, certainly well into the eleventh century. This legacy can still be seen, with a ghostly impression of that ancient woodland demonstrated by large numbers of small-leaved limes and wild service trees in hedges and woodland remnants.

Important ancient woodlands remain to this day but they are fragmented and subject to increasing pressures from adjacent land use and recreation. In addition, the traditional coppicing systems that are vital for many woodland species have ceased.

Together, these pressures mean that wonderful woodland specialists like herb paris, dormouse and wood warbler are now rare and missing from many woods; efforts to restore, buffer and reconnect these habitats are essential.

New tree and woodland planting to benefit wildlife can also help diversify landowners' incomes and offer commercial advantages to farmed landscapes. We should be making good use of this economic and ecological opportunity by growing more trees in the county, not least because, after China, the UK is the second largest importer of timber in the world! Given the consensus on the importance of trees and woodland in combatting climate change and in addressing biodiversity loss, we have a lot of work to do to get more trees and actively managed woodland into the landscape.

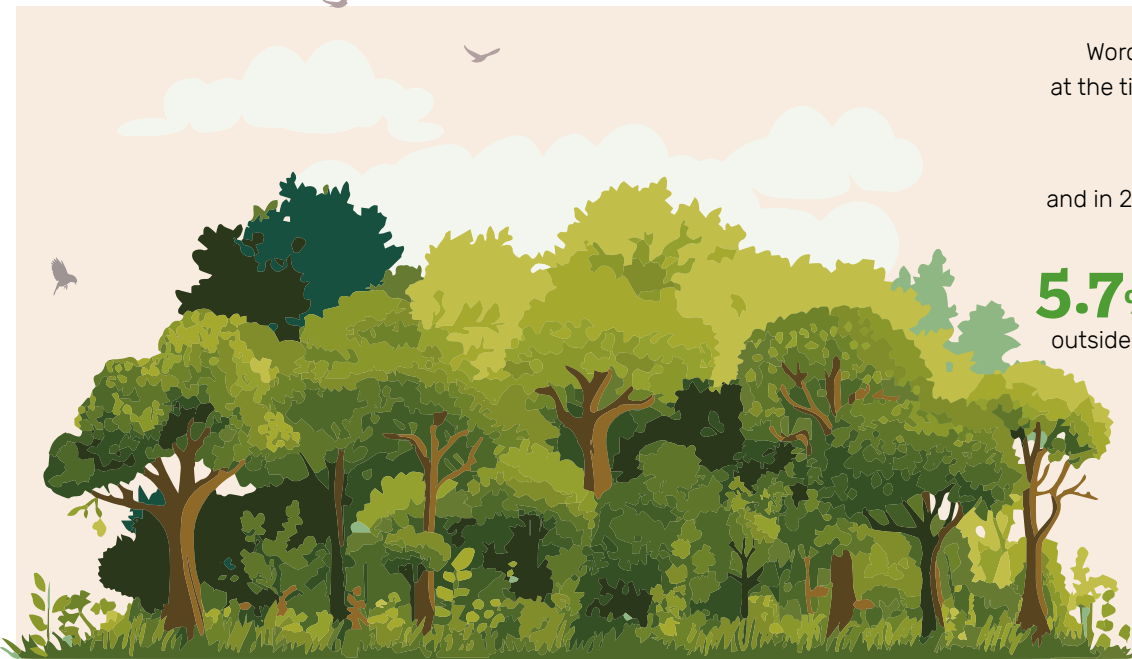
Trees outside woodland

Outside woodland, Worcestershire is blessed with other evocative treescapes. So rich in orchards was the county that Pershore was named for its pear orchards whilst branch lines (no pun intended) wandered the Teme valley and elsewhere to allow for easy fruit collection. Orchard losses have been substantial, driven

by intensification for better cropping and abandonment of uneconomic 'traditional' orchards. Those that remain provide vital habitat for rare species like mistletoe marble moth, noble chafer and lesser spotted woodpecker. Again, we need more of this essential habitat for wildlife.

Similarly, our veteran tree resource is as rich as anywhere in western Europe. These fine old trees form time-capsules in the landscape and host many specialist insects and fungi but are gradually being lost and not replaced. This is a serious issue because, coupled with the many miles of hedges in the county, these trees provide essential steppingstones and corridors for wildlife, including in towns where the density of trees may be very high.

Connectivity becomes increasingly important as climate change prompts changes in the range and distribution of many species and their capacity to move through the landscape becomes ever more vital. Linking blocks of woodland through new or improved hedgerow and tree networks is essential for the recolonisation of evocative species like the pine marten, now established to the north and south of our region. By providing links through the landscape we can create opportunities for species like this to move freely, without taking significant areas out of agricultural production.



Worcestershire woodland cover
at the time of the Domesday Book:

73,000 ha

and in 2018 **16,875 ha**

5.7% of land covered by trees
outside woodland (West Midlands):

43% UK hedge loss
between 1920–1996

2,300
species live on oak



Terry Whittaker/2020/ISON



Trees in farming systems

On-farm tree planting and management that benefits wildlife can also help diversify businesses and build farm resilience by improving natural nutrient cycles and delivering novel products. Innovative ways of incorporating trees into farmers' fields, such as alley-cropping (where crops are grown in the 'alley ways' between rows of trees), can deliver both abundant and healthy food and abundant and healthy wildlife. At the same time it can buffer the effects of extreme weather, providing valuable shade and shelter for crops and livestock, reducing soil erosion and flooding. This approach is inherently more intricate than conventional farming methods but by seeking to

harness the dynamism and complexity of natural systems, it can deliver significant benefits for farms. Shade and shelter means livestock use less energy to regulate their body temperature, reducing feed costs and mortality and increasing live weight gains and dairy production. A recent UK report indicated that dairy farmers may be losing tens of thousands of pounds due to heat stressed animals; impacts like this are likely to become more apparent as climate change intensifies.

This is important in the context of farmland economics and is a key driver for our work. Historically, trees and woodlands were highly valued for their economic and social benefits. Specifics varied over time – for a while oak bark for tanning was more valuable than the timber itself, for example – but for long periods woodlands were grazed or used

for pannage (the feeding of pigs on nuts and berries), foraging, charcoal and wood products, all of which were economically important and helped form the woodland landscapes we value today.

This economic value drove management that benefitted wildlife, including woodland butterflies like white admiral and pearl-bordered fritillary, which need the sunlit woodland flora of cleared coppice plots and glades. More recently, woodland grazing and browsing of hedgerows by livestock has somewhat fallen out of fashion but its restoration can bring meaningful economic benefits for farmers, have many health and wellbeing benefits for the animals and, where carefully implemented, contribute to thriving, structurally diverse woodland ecosystems.

It won't come as a surprise to

Severn Treescapes

Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trusts are working in close partnership with the Forestry Commission, the Environment Agency, Natural England, county councils, Ourboretum and Severn Trent to create a 60-mile corridor of increased tree cover. This will expand important ancient woodland, buffer current habitat, create new spaces for wildlife and create links and connections, allowing existing wildlife to move and thrive. In turn, this will help to deliver a diverse, resilient and nature-filled functioning landscape

with all the benefits this brings to landowners and society at large.

We are working with landowners to identify opportunities that deliver the economic, social and ecological benefits of tree planting in a way that is practical, realistic and has real world value. Depending on circumstance, we'll advocate everything from shelterbelts and in-field trees that benefit livestock to innovative alley-cropping systems for crop protection and enhanced fruit production. We are linking up farmers and other landowners with information, knowledge, guidance and relevant funding opportunities to ensure the

right tree in the right place for the right reason.

Wildlife does not operate according to county boundaries so this innovative cross-Trust approach seeks to address environmental challenges with natural processes at all ecological scales.



 If you're a landowner and would like to know more about treescapes, visit www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/severn-treescapes or contact laurence@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org



Steve Bloomfield

learn that we are very keen to work with landowners in places where agricultural production is central to the local economy, to encourage more planting and better management of the existing tree resource. Our Severn Treescapes Partnership is all about integrating trees into productive landscapes and is already paying dividends in terms of new planting proposals and innovative management of trees that are already present.

This matters not just for wildlife but for us. Trees offer a range of products that are important for human infrastructure and survival. From nutritious, high-value nuts and fruit to quality hardwood timber for our furniture and buildings, to the firewood that keeps us warm and other woodland products like hurdles, bean poles, gates, stiles and foot bridges, we

make continuous use of trees. Despite this, the overwhelming loss of ancient woodland sites and the fragmentation of treed landscapes that remain are real concerns for the future of the county's wildlife. Working with landowners to get more trees into the landscape is vital if we are to redress historic losses and build a climate resilient and wildlife rich future for Worcestershire.

Trees and climate change

Trees, whether in woodlands, hedges, scrub orchards or open country offer some of the largest carbon sequestration rates of any semi-natural habitat in the UK. A recent study found that, on average, soil beneath hedgerows stored 31% more carbon than that of nearby

grassland. Trees also assist in flood mitigation by intercepting and slowing rainfall, by acting as a barrier to overland flow, by slowing and storing water in the soil and actively transpiring moisture back to the atmosphere. They also capture pollutants and help to provide us with clean air and water, which in the context of a changing climate will be ever more important.



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



Laurence Richards, Severn Treescapes Trees and Woodlands Advisor loves re-integrating trees for biodiversity, climate and production.

Local news

Big Give Christmas Challenge

Can you help us to raise vital funds to inspire the next generation of wildlife champions?

Generous donors at the Big Give Christmas Challenge will match your donation and double the impact for Worcestershire's children. Your donation will help us to bridge the growing disconnection between children and nature, ensuring a brighter and more sustainable future for both wildlife and the next generation.

Whether through immersive experiences like school visits to our nature reserves, onsite lessons or support in transforming school grounds into vibrant wildlife habitats, we strongly believe that every child deserves the opportunity to experience the wonders of wildlife. If we can encourage just one in every four people to take meaningful action for wildlife, it can be enough to change the behaviour of the majority. With your support we



Brian Taylor

can inspire a wave of positive change.

Your donation will help us to subsidise school visits, equip schools with resources and inspire them to enhance their own spaces as well as expand our onsite lessons provision.

You can find out more about some of our work with children on pages 30–31 and you can donate via the Big Give Christmas Challenge between 28th November and 5th December via <https://bit.ly/BGCCNaturesClassroom>



Penny Frith

We bet you didn't know

Glycerol production in hibernating queen bumblebees essentially acts as an anti-freeze and prevents ice crystals forming in the fluids of their cells. Look for new queens on the wing in early spring and let us know what you spot www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings

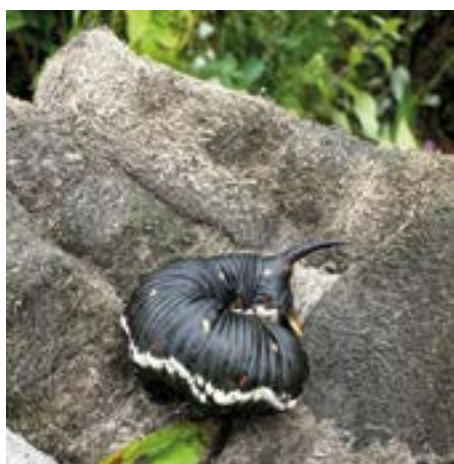
E-cards

If you've decided to save money on cards and stamps this year, why not send wildlife e-cards instead? For a small donation, you can email a wildlife-themed card and help raise funds for our work. Visit <https://bit.ly/WWT-ecards> to browse our cards.



Unwanted books?

If you're creating space for this year's Christmas presents and have good quality wildlife books that no longer fit on your shelf, consider donating them to us. Some might be appropriate for the Trust's library whilst others could be sold to raise funds for our work. If you have books that you'd like to pass along, please get in touch with our bookselling volunteers Joan and Richard via enquiries@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org Thank you.



Paul Moseley

Rare caterpillar at Upton Warren

Thanks to the eagle-eyes of volunteer warden Paul Moseley, a rare convolvulus hawk-moth caterpillar became just the second record of such in the county. Small numbers of the adult moth arrive in the UK every year but to find a larva this far north is rare indeed. British weather is too cold for the large moths to survive winter but with our warming climate, this may change over time.

Craft fair

Join us at Lower Smite Farm for our popular Christmas craft fair and stock up on handmade goodies from local craftspeople. Teas, coffees and cakes will be available and if the weather is lovely, why not take a stroll around our nature trail. Saturday 25th November, 10.00 am–4.00 pm, free entry www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/events/2023-11-25-christmas-craft-fair



Ruth Bourne

Digital magazine

If you'd like to read your magazine in digital format, a pdf is available to download from www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/magazineNov23. There's a short form on the download page for you to let us know how you'd like to switch to receiving a digital rather than a hard copy of future issues.

Raffle winners

This year's raffle winners are:
1st Mrs V. Mason, 2nd Mr K. Mullen, 3rd Mr A. Morris, 4th Mrs M. Davis, 5th Mr & Mrs Mackie.
Thank you to everyone who bought tickets. We sold over £6,716, raising funds for our work across the county.

Thank you!

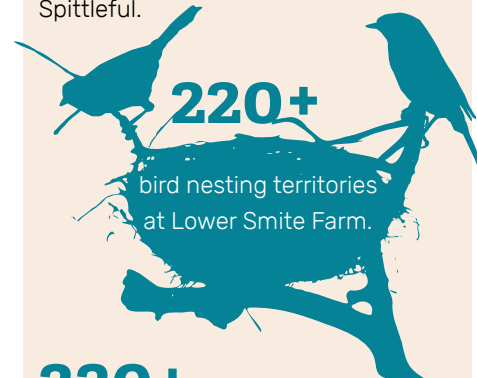
In 2023, your membership has supported

3 pairs of stonechat bred at The Devil's Spittleful.



220+

bird nesting territories at Lower Smite Farm.



230+

planning applications considered.



20+ community groups supported to help nature.



2 rare noble chafer beetles seen at The Knapp and Papermill.

138

bats



recorded at Piper's Hill & Dodderhill Common nature reserve on one evening in early September.





Peter Cairns/2020VISION

Wild communities network

If you're a community group helping wildlife in your neighbourhood, we'd love you to add your details to our new wild communities map. Similarly, if you'd love to help wildlife where you live and are wondering whether someone's already had the same idea, take a look to find an active group

near you. If one in four people take meaningful action for wildlife, it can change the way all of society view our natural environment . . . and it might start with you. See our website and make a difference www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/community-action

Stock up for Christmas

There's still time to buy your cards, calendars and gifts from the Trust's online shop www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/shop

If supporting your local retailer is more your thing, our cards can be purchased from the following outlets (some also stock our calendar):

Abberley village shop, Alfrick Community Shop, Cards for Good Causes at Worcester Guildhall, Clive's Fruit Farm, Droitwich Heritage Centre, The Hop Pocket, Martley village shop, Revill's Farm Shop, The Shop at Crowle, Tudor House Museum, Upton Snodsbury village shop.



Mike Averill

Willow emerald damselfly

In your summer issue, Mike Averill reported how the willow emerald damselfly had been reported in just six locations since its arrival in the county in 2022. Sightings were fewer this year but a new record in Kyre Park, near Tenbury Wells, makes it the second most westerly site in the UK for this rapidly colonising damselfly.

Your wild sightings

If you'd like to know what's been spotted where, take a look at our new Wildlife Sightings map www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings If you've submitted one of the 400+ verified sightings via our short form in 2023, we've added it to our map. During the winter months, we'll be adding previous years' records to the map too. Big thanks to our Wildlife Sightings volunteer, Diana Westmoreland, who sorts through every record submitted, replies to queries and organises records for submission to Worcester Wildlife Biological Records Centre and for upload to the map.



Events near you

- Fri 24th November – Biological recording and an introduction to beetles with our Stourbridge and Hagley Local Group.
 - Thur 7th December – Wetlands for people and wildlife with our Malvern Local Group.
 - Sun 10th December – A wander around Astley Burf with Wyre Forest Local Group.
 - Wed 13th December – Christmas quiz and social evening with Redditch Local Group.
- Visit www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on for information about all our events.

UK news

River restoration should be high on the agenda, with pollution threatening wildlife like kingfishers

Nature for the people

The coming year will bring with it a general election, with the people of the UK given the opportunity to choose their representatives in government. One thing is clear: whichever party forms the UK Government, they must make it a priority to tackle the nature and climate crisis.

The Wildlife Trusts have created a set of asks detailing what we want to see – and what nature needs – from the UK Government. Our asks are broken down into five key sections, each with three simple steps outlining how it can be achieved. The Wildlife Trusts are calling for whomever makes the next UK Government to:

1. Bring back our lost wildlife

Nature is declining at a speed never previously seen and shows no signs of slowing. We need the Government to reverse this trend and put nature into recovery. They must ensure that at least 30% of land and sea is protected for nature by 2030. They must also stop the damage to our seas through sewage discharges and river pollution, as well as safeguarding Marine Protected Areas from development and destructive fishing methods. Finally, we want to see wild beavers in every major river catchment in England, Scotland and Wales – restoring wetlands and making space for nature.

2. End river pollution

Many of the UK's rivers are polluted beyond legal limits and less than half are in good condition ecologically – but the Government can take action. Firstly, they must ensure that environmental watchdogs have the powers and resources to enforce the law, with regular monitoring and commensurate penalties for parties who knowingly break it. They must halve nutrient pollution from sewage, wastewater and agriculture by 2030. Finally, we need stronger protection for chalk streams, one of the world's rarest habitats.

3. Fund wildlife-friendly farming

Farming is one of the main causes of wildlife declines but it doesn't have to be. Government can support farmers to grow in harmony with nature and help bring wildlife back. They need to double the budget for wildlife-friendly farming, halve the use of

pesticides and protect farming against climate change.

The extreme heat and droughts in 2017 and 2022 provided a taste of the reality to come; farmers need more support to adapt to climate change.

4. Green our communities

Too many of us live in polluted, nature-deprived neighbourhoods. These poor quality living conditions are

damaging people's health and cutting lives short. We need a Natural Health Fund to reduce the strain on the NHS and public services. We need a legally mandated right to a clean and healthy environment, protecting nature and the health and wellbeing of us all. And we need all children to be given the opportunity to learn outdoors.

5. Tackle the climate emergency

Climate change is driving nature's decline, whilst the loss of wildlife and wild places leaves us ill-equipped to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to change. It's a vicious cycle that demands immediate action. We need the UK Government to help nature and people adapt to climate change, protect the blue carbon in our marine environments, and make our homes more energy efficient.



Worcestershire's

As the days grow shorter and colder, you might normally expect activity on our reserves to go into hibernation but this winter is shaping up to be a very busy season indeed.

In December we are excited to be starting work at Upton Warren nature reserve thanks to a grant from Natural England's Species Recovery Programme. Designed to provide a lifeline for England's priority and threatened

species to improve their conservation prospects, the funding will allow us to undertake substantial improvements to both the Moors and Flashes pools. The main work will be to remove silt and to rebuild islands that have been eroded by wave action, providing more space for birds to breed. The islands will then be reinforced by geotextile matting to improve their resistance to erosion. The islands at The Flashes have been used

by avocets in recent years to nest, one of the most inland sites for this usually coastal breeding species. There is often competition for space, so restoring the islands will reduce that pressure as well as providing more feeding areas for other species.

We will also be using the funding to reduce the cover of reeds around our sand martin bank and to try and reduce the presence of the non-native invasive



nature reserves

New Zealand pygmy weed. Access for machinery is very limited at Upton Warren so we will be using specialist small amphibious vehicles to do the work and it may take up to a month to complete the project across both sites. This will cause some disruption for visitors but it will be for the overall benefit of the birds that use the site.



I'm pleased to say that we now

own Rookery Cottage Meadows, two wildflower meadows covering 10 acres near Feckenham that we have had a management agreement on for the last five years. It is excellent news that we have secured the ownership of these fields to protect them for the future.

We are pleased to welcome Jack Reeves to our team as our new Climate and Wildlife Officer. Jack will be helping us design future woodland planting

schemes on new reserves as well as helping to plan monitoring of climate impacts on our existing reserves along with necessary adaptation strategies to help our sites adjust to warming temperatures. We also welcomed two new conservation trainees in September. To date, three of the last four trainees have gone on to their first job in conservation, either with us or the Malvern Hills Trust, so it's a great success.

Tiddesley Wood threat

You'll be aware from Colin's introduction on page two about the threat to Tiddesley Wood from a proposed planning development. As you'll see from the other articles in this magazine, the Trust is undertaking a great deal of work to develop new woodlands so it is deeply concerning to also be having to defend an existing woodland that was first recorded nearly 1,000 years ago in the Domesday Book with many of the associated species that have inhabited it since before that time.

At the time of writing we are waiting for the developers to come forward with a formal planning application but our understanding is that they will be looking to build around 300 houses, some of which will be within 150m of the woodland edge.

Our recent surveys to prove the value of the wood have shown Tiddesley Wood to be of county level importance for bats, supporting at least 12 species, five of which are considered rare/very rare for Worcestershire and two species classified as near threatened on the IUCN global red list of species. These include Brandt's, whiskered, Daubenton's, lesser horseshoe and Bechstein's bats, all recorded in recent surveys.

We recorded 51 bird species in the wood and 44 of these were confirmed as breeding species, of which 19 species were either red or amber listed due to country-wide population declines. We also confirmed glow-worms and purple emperor butterflies for the first time in recent years, among many other

well-established woodland plants and animals. All of which is to say that Tiddesley Wood is an amazing place, packed in to a relatively small 76 hectares.

Of course, Worcestershire needs housing so some might be tempted to think of this as a relatively small step, the enclosure of just one edge of the wood by a few hundred houses with Pershore not much beyond. It is the cumulative impact of many factors, however, that add up to critical damage to a rare habitat; whether that be pollution, the impact of light on bats and other nocturnal species, the additional deaths of mammals and birds in the wood from the influx of many more domestic pets or the loss of feeding habitat and corridors across the landscape, the wildlife arteries that connect back to the woodland heart of the landscape. There are other sites already in the local housing plan less damaging than building next to a remnant of ancient woodland.

At the heart of this is the value we put on places of irreplaceable value for wildlife. Whether they are identified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, such as Tiddesley Wood, or other ways of showing ecological value, this a place that has something other places do not. When it is gone, we can't get it back. Perhaps this was understandable when such locations were commonplace but now we know their rarity and value, it is hard to justify their knowing destruction by the death by a thousand cuts. Keep an eye on our website and social media to find out how you can take action if you wish to protect Tiddesley Wood.

Green Farm update

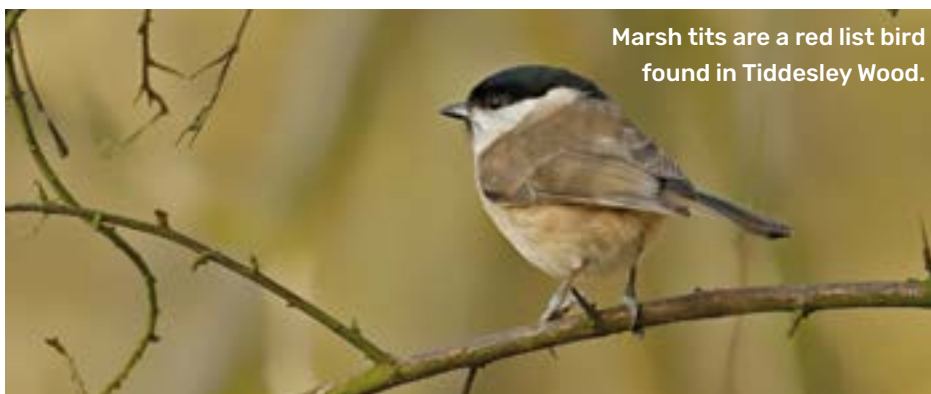
Thankfully, we manage many reserves and most of them have much more positive stories to tell. We've previously mentioned our plans for Green Farm, our new extension to Monkwood, another wonderful ancient woodland. After two years of planning, we have now installed the essential bridges, fencing and a water supply and we will have started the planting of over 3,500 trees. Through our project officer we will be working with the local community, including nearby schools, to plant a mixture of native woodland, hedges and old varieties of orchard trees.



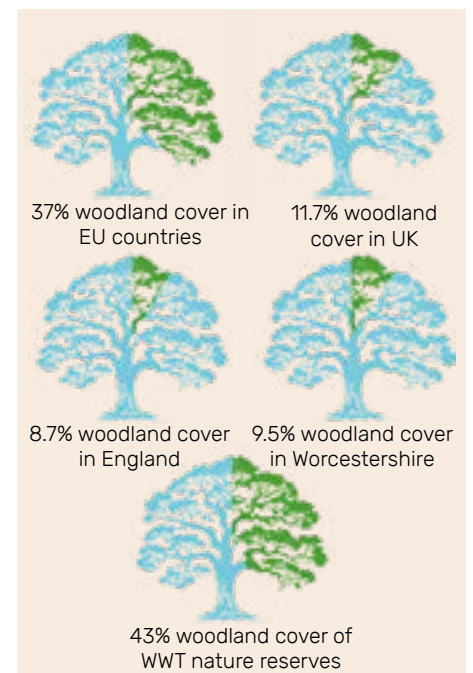
Find out more about how you can help Tiddesley Wood www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/our-position-proposed-orchard-farm-development
Keep up to date with our blogs www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/blog



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



John Caswell





HIGH FIVE HIGHLIGHTS



Bob Coyle



Julie Hunt



Brian Eversham



Jenny Farmer



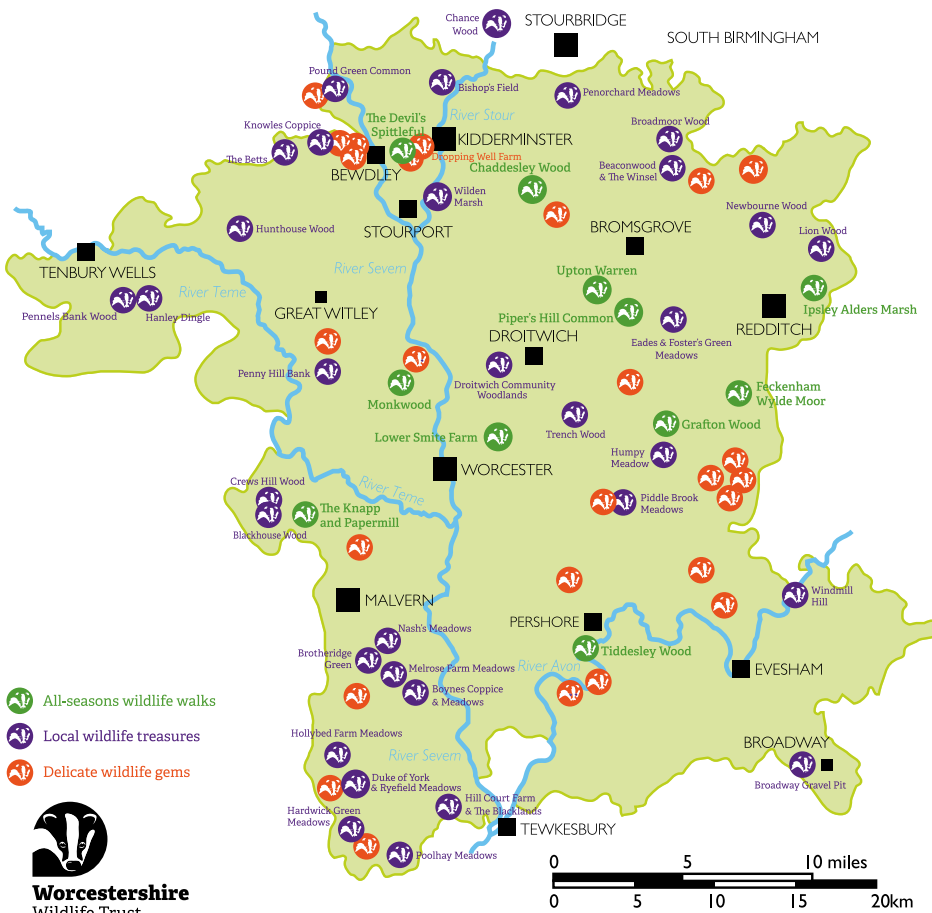
Mark Hamblin, 2020 DIVISION

1. Hibernating small tortoiseshell in your house, garage or shed.
2. Robin in your garden.
3. Turkey tail fungus on decaying wood.
4. Roe deer in fields near woodland.
5. Woodcock in woodland.



Did you know?
Bats make up a quarter of the UK's mammal species and can lose a quarter of their weight during hibernation.

Dorset Wildlife Trust



- All-seasons wildlife walks
- Local wildlife treasures
- Delicate wildlife gems



Worcestershire Wildlife Trust



Submit your sightings of wildlife

www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings

Volunteer with us www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/volunteer

Worcestershire's bountiful berries

Winter berries – a fabulous supply of food and nutrients for wildlife in the coldest, shortest and darkest days of the year. We often feed the birds with seeds and nuts in winter but the shrubs and trees below can provide both food and shelter for our garden visitors. Perhaps you could consider including plants that are good for berries in your garden. Not only will they benefit wildlife but you will also have a colourful addition to your outdoor space (and maybe discover some medicinal, mythological or mystic properties that you never knew existed).



Discover more [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-explorer/trees-and-shrubs)

[wildlife-explorer/trees-and-shrubs](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-explorer/trees-and-shrubs)



Julie Grainger, WWT Green Farm Engagement Officer has promoted the importance of conservation through education and environmental projects.



Paul Lane



Zsuzsanna Bird

Mistletoe

Mistletoe is a parasitic shrub that has white sticky berries and oval leaves, the berries are a favourite of birds such as blackcaps. Norse mythology tells us that the goddess Frigg wept tears when her son was killed, they turned into white berries, fell into his wounds and healed him. Frigg blessed the mistletoe plant and promised to kiss all who passed underneath.



Harry Green

Wild service

Wild service trees are inconspicuous for much of the year but their white blossom in spring and crimson leaves in autumn give them away. Many of the fruits fall to the ground where they may be eaten by birds or small mammals. Also known as the 'Chequers tree', its fruits were once regularly used to make alcohol; many pubs and inns are called Chequers.



Mark Robinson

Blackthorn

With its white frothy blossom and gin-enhancing berries (sloes), blackthorns make beautiful hedgerow shrubs. Birds nest among the dense, thorny thickets where they eat insects in summer and feast on sloes in autumn. It's been used as a treatment for bladder, kidney and stomach disorders as well as a mouthwash for sore throats, tonsillitis and laryngitis.



Rosemary Winnal

Spindle

This small woodland and hedgerow tree is most striking in the autumn when clusters of bright pink-and-orange berries (poisonous to us) hang from its twigs, providing food for mice, birds and even foxes. The very straight, hard wood of spindle was traditionally used for making 'spindles' for spinning wool and today is used to make high-quality charcoal for artists.



Brian Eversham

Wayfaring tree

This is a small tree of woodland edges and hedgerows. The creamy flowers in May and June are followed by red berries that eventually ripen to black. These berries are particularly attractive to birds and small mammals, which help to disperse the seeds. The tree got its name from the herbalist Gerard who, in 1597, noticed it on routes to London.



Wendy Carter

Holly

Holly is easily recognised by its dark green, spiny, evergreen leaves and small, bright red berries; an important source of food for birds like redwings and fieldfares. Indeed, mistle thrushes guard their own berry-laden bushes with great veracity. In Celtic mythology it is said that whilst the holly controls a woodland's dark, winter months, the oak controls the lighter summer.



Rosemary Winnal

Yew

A well-known tree of churchyards, yews can live for hundreds of years, turning into a maze of hollow wood beneath dense foliage. The bright red yew berries are poisonous to most mammals but badgers can eat the fruit and pass the intact seeds in their poop without being poisoned. Scientists have recently discovered that extracts from the bark of the yew have anti-cancer properties.



Dom Cragg

Guelder rose

A small tree of hedgerows, woods, scrub and wetlands, this is an ancient woodland indicator species. It displays large, white flowers in summer and red berries in autumn, which are an important food source for birds including bullfinches, waxwings and mistle thrushes. Guelder rose is one of the national symbols of Ukraine and it features in many folk songs, poems, art and embroidery.



Rosemary Winnal

Cotoneaster

Cotoneaster was introduced to the UK in 1879 from Eastern Asia as an ornamental plant but garden escapees now swamp natural habitats. Whilst its berry-laden branches provide food for pollinators in summer and birds in winter, consider holly, ivy or wild privet as garden replacements that offer shelter, food and nesting sites for lots of wild creatures.



Dancing through the treetops



Learn more about your garden birds
www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/bewitching-garden-birds.

Create a woodland edge in your garden or community
greenspace [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/actions/
how-make-woodland-edge-garden-wildlife](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/actions/how-make-woodland-edge-garden-wildlife)



Pete Walkden

Join me on a journey through the treetops, following the birds as they flit from tree to tree.

A winter walk in a woodland, trees towering above. A small bird flies from behind me, over my left shoulder, and lands near the base of a tall oak tree in front of me. It climbs jerkily up the trunk, clinging on with relatively big feet and supported by a long stiff tail. Spiralling around the trunk and under big branches, it searches the interlacing canyons of cracks and crannies in the bark for food; tiny spiders, beetles, flies, moth pupae, insects from every group as well as millipedes, woodlice, centipedes and even small snails. All are grabbed by its curved thin bill, a sabre that easily reaches into the dark hidey holes, grabs and swallows. This mouse-like tree-climbing bird is, of course, a treecreeper, spending 80% of its winter day climbing and searching the bark ravines. The trees provide all the food it needs to keep its tiny 10g body alive but it has to work hard.

As it climbs, I hear the thin calls of a flock of birds approaching through

the treetops, arriving in a busy flurry. They're also searching for food, busily inspecting every twig, bud and small branch for invertebrates. As soon as they find the more obvious ones, they drift on to the next tree and the next, a continuing journey. These are mainly long-tailed tits, small active balls of fluff with long tails – flying lollipops, each weighing much the same as treecreeper. I count 24, probably two family parties that have joined up for the winter to forage, armed with multiple eyes constantly on the lookout for would-be predators: sparrowhawks. In cold weather long-tails cluster together at night to roost on a branch in a bush, forming a bird ball for mutual warmth.

With the long-tails are a few blue tits, great tits, coal tits and goldcrests. All are searching for invertebrate food on the tree larder. The long-tails and blue tits keep to the buds and twigs in the treetops; the great tits search lower down, even dropping to the ground at times to search on fallen decaying wood or amongst moss and taking seeds as well as invertebrates. Coal tits and

goldcrests are more closely associated with conifers, searching the needles for very small invertebrates and taking seeds from open cones. Here, they're searching for invertebrates around the mid-tree.

For all these small birds the cold short days of winter are challenging and the search for food is an almost continuous journey to stay alive. They search quickly, taking the more obvious inverts and moving on. I watch as they circle from tree to tree before reaching the edge of the woodland and dropping down to search in an adjacent band of low scrub before moving on again into a nearby old orchard.

Orchard pickings

Old orchard trees in old pesticide-free orchards support lots of wildlife from insects on buds and twigs to beetles in the decaying trunks. Following a methodical search of the fruit trees, the long-tails fly quickly across an open green grassy space into a very tall old hawthorn hedge – search and

swallow, search and swallow all the while. They pass an old magpie's nest, a bulky structure with a twiggy thorn roof over a substantial nest cup that's lined with mud. Hidden from the tits are invertebrates clearing up the debris left by the fledged magpies; another community with its own predators. There are other old nests in the hedge – bulky blackbirds, tightly woven chaffinches – all with their own clean-up brigade.

The travelling long-tails next encounter a flock of noisy thrushes in the hedge-top, feasting on the berry crop. These are fieldfares and redwings that nest in Scandinavia as well as blackbirds, possibly from Germany. A clump of female mistletoe with white berries is visited by a mistle thrush. In places, ivy has climbed into the hedge canopy and flowered in the sun to produce successive crops of deep blue berries sought by blackbirds, robins and blackcaps but ignored by long-tails.

From garden to churchyard

A garden with a bird-feeding station borders the end of the hedge and the long-tails are briefly enticed to pick up nut fragments scattered by the local

feeding tits but they soon move on and fly quickly over a patch of blackthorn scrub and into the first of a row of big pollarded willows bordering a brook. They search the twigs and branches above the pollard crown that contains a pile of feather debris from an old mallard's nest. In the decaying hollow trunk is an old wren's nest and above this, deep in the shelter of dry decaying wood, two insects hibernate; a gaudy black and yellow queen hornet and a less obvious queen tree bumblebee both await the warm spring weather when they will emerge and start a colony.

The long-tails continue along a low, heavily flailed hedge – no berries or inverts left here – into a churchyard. The coal tits and goldcrests are tempted away to search amongst pine and fir needles, hovering in front of a sprig and grabbing tiny insects. Nearby are several female yew trees laden with red berries, not of much interest to long-tails but greenfinches are busy manipulating them in their bills to remove the poisonous kernel case and to crack the shell and extract and eat the seed. Perhaps the roosting tawny owl watches, hidden in the deep shade? As dusk falls, it will fly softly into the nearby woodland to hunt mice nesting amongst the ground flora, fallen leaves and twigs.

Home to roost

The long-tails head to a large oak in the graveyard corner, up into the crown to search the topmost twigs. What next? They've completed a circuit in their home range following a well-used trail that winds for about five miles through the countryside visiting woods, scrub, orchards, gardens and long lengths of big hedge leading back to their starting point, a thick tangle of bramble and wild rose where they perch and preen for a while before settling to roost for the night. Shortly after dawn tomorrow they'll be off again, maybe following the same trail or perhaps choosing another within their home range. Some days your garden will fill with long-tails for a short while but they may not return for a few days until their continuous search for food brings them back.

Trees and woody scrub are so important to keeping these birds alive. They provide house and home for large numbers of invertebrates: food for the birds and the keys to biodiversity and bioabundance. If invertebrates vanish, so will many birds.



Harry Green,

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



Six places to see terrific trees

Trees are impressive at any time of year. They can live for centuries, the shape of their trunks and branches telling the story of their long lives. Some grow tall, others wide and sprawling, creating natural, living statues.

Winter is a wonderful time to discover the UK's old and unusual trees, as many have shed their leaves, revealing the unique shapes beneath. Here are six Wildlife Trust nature reserves where the trees have a story to tell.

You can discover even more at wildlifetrusts.org/ancient-trees

1 Glenarm, Ulster Wildlife

One of Europe's best examples of wooded river valley and parkland, with large numbers of ancient and veteran oak trees. Keep an eye out for signs of mammals including red squirrels, pine martens and badgers.

Where: Glenarm, BT44 0BD

2 The Hollies, Shropshire Wildlife Trust

A spellbinding grove of ancient hollies, perched on the edge of the Stiperstones. Each windswept tree is a unique character. Some are three or four centuries old, wizened and creaking with age.

Where: Snailbeach, SY5 0NS

3 Moseley Bog, Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust

Moseley Bog is a gateway to Middle Earth. The gnarled old trees were a favourite of author J. R. R. Tolkien, who lived nearby. They provided the inspiration for the old forests in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*.

Where: Birmingham, B13 9JX

Did you spot any tree-mendous trees?

We'd love to know how your search went.

Please share your best photos!

✉ @wildlifetrusts ✉ @WorcsWT

4 Hethel Old Thorn, Norfolk Wildlife Trust

The Wildlife Trusts' smallest nature reserve is just large enough to protect a single, very special tree. Hethel Old Thorn is thought to be one of the oldest hawthorns in England. Legend has it that the tree grew from the staff of Joseph of Arimathea.

Where: Wymondham, NR14 8HE

5 Cwm Byddog, Radnorshire Wildlife Trust

One of the top 20 ancient tree sites in Wales, with some trees thought to be up to 800 years old. One mighty oak has a girth of 6.3m, whilst there's an alder with a 5m girth. With so many old trees, it's also a great place to see lichens.

Where: Powys, HR3 5SL

6 Alderney Community Woodland, Alderney Wildlife Trust

This may not be the oldest woodland on our list, but these trees tell a story. Many of Alderney's trees were felled by the Nazi's during WWII, so the Trust has planted over 12,000 trees to bring the woodland back. This history is evident in the Community Woodland, with several bunkers on the reserve.

Where: Les Rochers, Alderney



Frosty oak tree © Guy Edwards/2020VISION

Wild notebook

Mustn't forget

Five things to photograph:

- Mistletoe silhouetted against the sky
- Twigs coated with rime in a cold spell
- A young sapling growing out of an old tree stump
- Tree buds from five different tree species
- Marble galls on oak twigs

Five things to do:

- Watch for birds feeding from a female yew tree with berries
- Make a whistle out of an elder stick
- Visit an old church and look for tree foliage in the decorated stonework
- Identify five different conifer species growing locally
- Look for creatures overwintering in cracks in tree bark

All photographs by Rosemary Winnall

★ STAR SPECIES



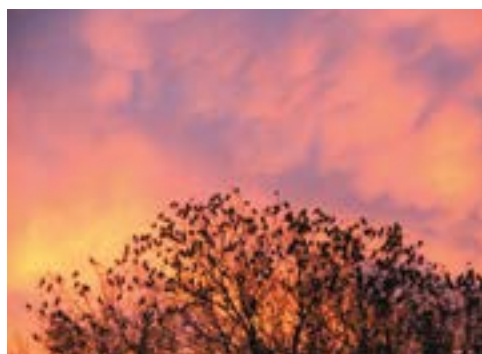
Wolf's milk

Lycogala epidendron

Down in the dark, steep wood where few people venture, deadwood is everywhere and fungi provide beads of colour in this winter world. We tread carefully and stoop to examine slime moulds on fallen decaying trunks. A gentle tap on top of one of these orange balls shows that it is still soft and immature, so will contain a pink fluid. As the spores develop inside, the balls harden and change colour to grey brown. Slime moulds were formally classified as fungi but are now part of the kingdom Protista.

Jackdaws at dawn

As they fly up from their woodland winter roost we hear them coming well before we see them. They gather each dawn on this, the tallest tree in the neighbourhood, chattering to each other, making new friends and settling differences before flying off to the fields to feed for the day.



Honey fungus *Armillaria mellea*

Black strangling bootlaces show that this tree is likely to have been killed by honey fungus. These mycelial threads, or rhizomorphs, will have grown through the soil to infect the roots of the tree before growing up under the bark. Interestingly the underground hyphae are bioluminescent.



Tree branches

How many of us ever lie down in woodland and view the trees from a different angle? There's a lot going on high up in the canopy, much of which we are unaware. The trees seemingly give each other space to grow and photosynthesise, making patterns against the sky.

Frozen catkins

Like frozen fingers in this December hedgerow these catkins, formed in the autumn, provide an assurance of new growth to come and springtime vigour in response to increases in daylight and temperature. But first they must wait and withstand the frost, tightly closed to protect their many male flowers.



Sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*

Some fruits can still be found in winter if squirrels and mice haven't reached them first. This case has split, revealing its beautifully furry protective lining to keep the precious nut safe as it falls off the tree, making it one of nature's beautiful surprises and food for free.



Tree slug *Lehmannia marginata*


This common slug with its short-keeled body looks translucent and has watery mucous. It can be found on tree trunks where it feeds on algae, fungi and lichens. It usually has a safe refuge in a hole in the bark or down amongst the roots to prevent it desiccating.

Woodpecker holes

Winter is a good time to search local woodland for holes in dead trees. These have been excavated carefully and precisely by great spotted woodpeckers. They may use the same tree for more than one year, excavating a new nest or roosting hole lower down the trunk.



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



Nature's cathedrals

Back in 2015, Dr Graham Hill of the University of Worcester identified over 3,100 individual trees over the age of 100 years in Worcestershire. It's no secret that trees are long lived, with most outliving humans and many having been around since before the building of our towns and cities. They shape our landscape and heritage but do we take for granted the history of such momentous individuals?

Watching history happen

It's common knowledge that yew trees are one of the most long-lived British trees, with lives that span thousands of years. There are a number of notable yew trees across the county but the one within the grounds of St Peter's church in Powick is an individual worth focusing on. It's not known how old this tree is but it's likely to have been there when the church was built in the late twelfth century. This yew has seen the reign of at least 35 monarchs (starting from King John in 1199) but, more impressively, survived the battles of Powick Bridge (1642) and Worcester (1651) during the English Civil War. It is believed that there are bullet marks on the southern wall of the church from the battle of Worcester, so this tree was likely in the middle of the action!

In December 1746, John White spent 22 days planting 755 trees within the grounds of Croome for George William, who became the 6th Earl of Coventry. The trees included a mix of beech, larch, horse chestnut, elm and Scots pine; later came exotic specimens, including Spanish and Oriental plane trees, many of which can still be seen some 277 years later. Planted before Lancelot 'Capability' Brown arrived at Croome and before the Court was remodelled, the trees were put in the ground when Henry Pelham was Prime Minister (only England's third) and have now lived through the leadership of 76 others.

In the elaborate gardens of Witley Court stood a Greek fir tree that was

planted in the 1870s, when the country house underwent its architectural conversion to replicate a grand Italianate mansion. The Greek fir was ring dated in 2003 and is thought to have been over 120 years old but, sadly, had to be felled due to safety concerns. During its lifetime it would have seen the refurbished glory of the mansion, parties at the court attended by the young King Edward VII and the eventual burning down of the house in September 1937.

Worcestershire landmarks

Whilst Worcester Cathedral was being built and expanded, the Royal Forest of Feckenham was doing similar. Its expansion and contraction under different monarchs influenced the lives of many across the centuries, from those subject to strict forest law to the salt producers in Droitwich who relied on the timber to fuel their salt pans. The remaining patches of ancient woodland are still important today, being recognised as biodiversity hotspots. Sites such as Grafton Wood, Chaddesley Woods and Piper's Hill and Dodderhill Common are managed by the Trust to preserve their wildlife and historical value.

The new generation

At the turn of the millennium, millions of trees were planted across the country to mark the momentous occasion. Worcestershire is home to three Millennium Woods and a plethora of woodlands and trees that were planted to celebrate the year 2000, with parish councils, schools and friends



of groups planting trees to mark the momentous occasion.

Millhampton Wood, just outside Ombersley, was planted to mark the millennium as part of the Woodland Trust's Woods on your Doorstep initiative. I also marked the millennium with my birth, making myself and all millennium woodlands the same age. Now, at a maturing 23 years of age, the woodland of English oak, wild cherry and hazel trees is settling down into a naturally developing woodland ecosystem. In 2018, the Woodland Trust updated their management plan for Millhampton Wood, stating that its long-term objective for the woodland is 'to maintain a native species amenity woodland with a variety of associated habitats which is resilient and robust'. In contrast, in 2018 I was finishing my A-levels and starting my journey at university; I certainly didn't have any objectives for my upcoming 50+ years.

Once I and Millhampton Wood reach our 100th birthdays, I shall likely be in my final few years (assuming I make it that far), whereas Millhampton Wood will just be coming into its stride. Assuming the trees are managed sensibly, the oaks have the ability to see it through to the next millennia and the woodland itself will be a haven for wildlife.

Whilst the architectural styles of buildings come and go, nature's cathedrals – ancient trees and woodlands – will always remain, outliving those who planted them and seeing the unfolding of history before them.



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



Seasonal pickings

Many conversations I'd had during spring centred around a worrying lack of insects. The hot, sunny weather from late June to early July, in mid-August and early September, partially eased these earlier worries.

The meadows and woodland rides suddenly came alive with insects. Butterflies, sadly missed earlier in the year, were now abundant. Red admiral, comma and brimstone seemed to be fluttering around every flowerhead.

On a new members' walk in Tiddesley Wood on 24th June, the group were treated to the wonderful sight of a purple emperor landing on one of the member's shoes; to become probably the most photographed shoe/purple emperor combination the county has seen.

Then there were the ferocious aerial hunters that are my latest interest, dragonflies. This interest started late last summer, when southern and migrant hawkers grabbed my attention. One guidebook purchase later and I have

added emperor, brown hawkler, and scarce chaser to the ever-growing list of species diversity I've spotted on our nature reserves.

Isn't it amazing how one particular interest can lead to a desire to know more and unlock new avenues of discovery? I've always been a birdwatcher and this has now led to my developing an interest in butterflies and dragonflies. What's next for me I wonder?

For now, though, my focus has shifted to winter and to me that means migrant thrushes: redwing and fieldfare. One of the clear signs of the approaching winter are the nocturnal migration flights of redwing. Even on clear nights during November you may still hear a high pitched 'tseep' as a flock flies overhead. Once the fieldfare arrives, both can often be found in close company.

In keeping with my overall theme, my favourite place to see and hear them is in the orchards at Tiddesley Wood. The

chuckles of the fieldfare and the thin whistles of the redwing are guaranteed to lift the mood on a dull winter's day.

The fieldfare is a very handsome sight with its grey head and rump, warm brown back and speckled chest suffused with orange. And the redwing? Think of a song thrush but add a smart white eye stripe and a prominent red colouration on the flanks below the edge of the folded wing.

Top tip

Avoiding disturbance is as important in winter as during the rest of the year. Woodcock are nocturnal residents of our woodlands in winter and very easily disturbed by people and dogs wandering off paths.



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



Worcestershire trees

Words: **Graham Hill**

Photo: **Paul Lane**

Standing proud in the landscape, soaking up our carbon emissions, trees provide shelter and food for myriad insects, timber for our shelters and a visual stimulation for us. The trees of Worcestershire define its landscape, with over 3,300 notable trees recorded on the Worcestershire Ancient Trees Database (WAT), including:

🌳 **Largest:** On private farmland near Great Witley, measuring 12.75m around the trunk (that's a seven-person hug), one huge branch fell off this oak in 2020.

🌳 **Smallest:** A 0.1m tall recently coppiced oak in Wyre. With five stems and a girth of 4.5m it was last coppiced 90 years ago.

🌳 **Commonest:** Of the 3363 trees on the WAT database, 2066 are oaks. Oak is common through the county but so are willows (many as pollards along streams and rivers) although only seven have been recorded.

🌳 **Most missed:** Elm trees were a large part of the landscape until the 1960s when they were decimated by Dutch elm disease, although some elms survive as small trees.

🌳 **Most threatened:** Ash is threatened by ash dieback, an Asian fungal disease. There is the prospect that ash will follow elm into near oblivion although some seem to have resistance and may survive.

🌳 **Largest woodland:** Straddling the Worcestershire/Shropshire border, the Wyre Forest is our largest; at 1,455 hectares it is England's largest contiguous woodland National Nature Reserve.

🌳 **Largest Trust woodland:** Chaddesley Woods, at 101ha, is also a National Nature Reserve. It is possible that it has existed since the last ice-age but what is certain is its variety of trees, shrubs and ground cover plants.

🌳 **Blossom-rich:** Fruit trees in spring or hawthorn in May, blossom is a delight and an important part of the reproductive life of trees. The Vale of Evesham, long associated with fruit growing, may not have many veteran trees but it makes up for it with a springtime show of pink and white. The Blossom Trail was established in 1983 and is now 40 miles long, visiting the Pershore, Evesham and Broadway areas.

Tree-mendous connections

I wanted to start by describing to you my favourite tree but the more I tried to choose just one, the more I struggled. Without realising it, a number of trees are tangled up in the weft and weave of my life; the weeping willow and poplars I played under at primary school or the ash I visit each spring to see the buds bursting forth into their frothy purple mess. Woodlands come into the mix too; walks with my family in the bluebell woodland where I grew up live in my heart. I was reminded of a poem that's inscribed on a sculpture at Forestry England's Beechenhurst site in Gloucestershire. It was written by father and daughter Robin and Isla Collings and here's a snippet:

Deep in the forest the trees are talking
Their leaves are whispering in the wind
Can you hear their rustling gossip
A towering family, a copse of kin

Among the trees, the people are listening
Feet on the soil they join in the song
Under a lush green canopy, they're walking
An adventurous family, here too they belong.

I like the idea that humans and trees are co-existing on this journey through life. We perhaps have all felt that there is something about standing in a woodland or sitting under a tree that somehow draws us in. In fact, research suggests that trees tap into our nervous systems and emotions.

Connecting us to nature

'Nature connectedness' is a term coined by researchers at the University of Derby who have been looking at how we develop a deep relationship with nature, to make it part of our lives and to encourage pro-environmental behaviours. A blog by lead researcher Miles Richardson tells us how trees create a relationship with nature for both children and adults.

The blog explains how trees provide multiple health benefits and can spark a connection later in life. Miles summarises a study that showed participants who simply touched tree bark for 90 seconds, compared with touching man-made materials, had reduced stress levels. The Forestry Commission's research agency has highlighted that time

spent in woodlands could bring mental health benefits of £185 million cost savings for the NHS and employers.

Miles tells us that 'a tree is not a tree, rather a pathway to nature connectedness'. He references a report by a Finnish university that shows how a tree for a child 'offers multiple and intriguing opportunities for play (e.g. climbing and den building)' The report calls for more trees in play spaces to allow meaningful relationships with nature to emerge.

Why does this matter?

In order to tackle the biodiversity and climate crises we need to have one in four people taking meaningful action for nature by 2030. Research has shown that imparting scientific knowledge does not strongly connect people to undertake pro-environmental behaviours. Engaging people by connecting them to nature, however, does. The University of Derby researchers have suggested five ways that best encourage this; senses, beauty, emotion, meaning and compassion.

We need to understand the best activities to build connections to nature before we can grow people's confidence and knowledge to help them take action for wildlife. Could trees be a gateway for people to connect to nature and take greater care for our environment?

From little acorns

Together with the Trust's team of sessional tutors and volunteers, I'm focusing on building this connection in different ways. Our free Lost Words assembly, inspired by the Lost Words book by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris, is based around acorns. The assembly introduces the idea of the importance of caring for our trees as well as using our senses to notice, observe and name natural living things.

We're also devising a new activity for four- to six-year-olds. By creating an underground world to see the woodland habitat through the eyes of decomposers, we'll get children to think about what it's like to live



and survive amongst tree roots, building emotional and compassionate responses to living things.

Moving on to building knowledge and skills, I run Forest School for pupils aged 11-13 years with sessions focussing on activities that encourage knowing, caring and creating within a woodland space. The sessions are once a week for six weeks and we see transformations in both children and staff. One child, for example, spent the first session standing on the edge of the woodland, refusing to join in. By week six they were trying out knots, cooking on the campfire and whittling. Their time in the woodland gave them new-found confidence to be outdoors, play and build knowledge of a natural space; all inspired by the trees around them!

Mutual benefit

Whilst we do co-exist, right now trees probably care for us and give us far more than we do for them. Research and our experimentation with different engagement activities shows this can be re-balanced. Trees can grow a spark in humans of all ages to care for our natural world, allowing us to play, be calmed and inspired by these leaf-adorned giants.



Marissa Ryland, WWT School Engagement Officer who loves walking, moth trapping and inspiring children about nature.



If you would like to support our school work and help create wildlife champions of the future, please see page 10 for details of our Big Give Christmas Challenge.

Saving water



We've all noticed the recent changes in weather patterns. More of us are experiencing drought more often, and can expect to more frequently in future. Winter is the perfect time to start preparing your garden for a parched spring and summer.

Wildlife suffers in drought. Birds like robins and blackbirds struggle to find worms and grubs to feed their chicks when the soil dries up. What's more, leaves shrivel, putting caterpillars and other grubs that eat them at risk, while flowers produce less nectar, which has a knock-on effect on pollinators. As gardeners, we should adapt to drier conditions by growing more drought-resilient plants but we mustn't neglect the wildlife that also uses our gardens. By topping up bird baths and ponds, using grey water to hydrate our plants and providing supplementary food when

natural sources have (literally) dried up, we can make life easier for wildlife struggling to adjust to climate change.

Our reliance on mains water should be at the heart of dealing with drought. Aim to use less tap water, which means saving more rainwater. Collecting water in winter to use in spring and summer will not only keep your garden growing and your wildlife thriving, but will also reduce pressure on reservoirs and rivers when it's dry and sewerage systems when it's wet. When reservoirs dry up our rivers are drained as back-up but, conversely, heavy showers can result in sewage discharges into rivers and the sea. Everything is connected – simply by saving rainwater and using less mains water we can save local species, save entire river ecosystems and still have attractive, species-rich gardens.



Save water

Invest in water butts now to store up winter rain. Buy as many as you can afford and connect them to the downpipe of your house for maximum flow. (Councils may offer cheaper versions or you might find a bargain at your local tip.)

Illustrations by Hannah Bailey,
Kate Bradbury photograph © Sarah Cuttle



Get more tips for growing in harmony with nature at <https://mycoronationgarden.org>



for wildlife



Create shade

Grow tall plants or trees or let your hedge grow taller rather than cutting it back this winter. Plants in shade are less likely to scorch and the soil remains wetter.



Mulch the soil

Cover bare areas of earth with bark chippings, home-made compost, gravel or even plant material to lock in moisture, which will help plants grow.



Grow more plants

Cover every inch of space with plants, including climbers up walls and fences. The more plants you grow, the more humid your environment, the less dry the local atmosphere.



Add a pond

Now's a good time to dig a pond, which should fill naturally before spring. Ensure it has shallow margins and sloping sides and consider running a pipe from your shed roof so it fills automatically when it rains.



Make a rain garden

If budget allows, transform your space so that all rainwater soaks into the soil slowly, rather than going down the drain.



Grow drought-tolerant plants

Replace thirsty plants like Astrantia, astilbe and persicaria with drought-resilient plants like lavender and salvia, but don't stop growing natives as many species rely on them.

Use grey water

Keep a bucket in your shower, a washing up bowl in your kitchen sink and syphon water from your bath to hydrate your garden. Use eco detergents to reduce the impact on soil health and use the water immediately so it doesn't go bad.



Kate Bradbury is

passionate about wildlife-friendly gardening and the author of *Wildlife Gardening for Everyone and Everything*. Recently, she has provided advice for the Coronation Gardens for Food and Nature website.

Photo competition

Be part of our 2025 calendar!

Do you love being out in nature with a camera of some sort in your hand? If you capture the wonder of Worcestershire's wildlife and wild places, we'd love to see your images.

Whether your favourite wild spot is a nature reserve, a hidden corner of our towns and countryside or your own garden, keep a camera close to hand to capture the action.

Twelve lucky photographers will win an A4 space in our 2025 calendar and a copy each of the calendar. Runner's-up images also feature in the calendar and, of course, all entries help us to promote Worcestershire's fantastic wildlife.

The whole team is involved in judging and we're delighted to be joined by Pete Walkden www.petewalkden.co.uk and Jason Curtis www.wyrewildlife.co.uk to help with the difficult final decisions.

How to enter

Visit www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/photography-competition to upload up to six images – you'll need to tell us who you are and where the images were taken. Full terms and conditions are on the website.

Closing date:

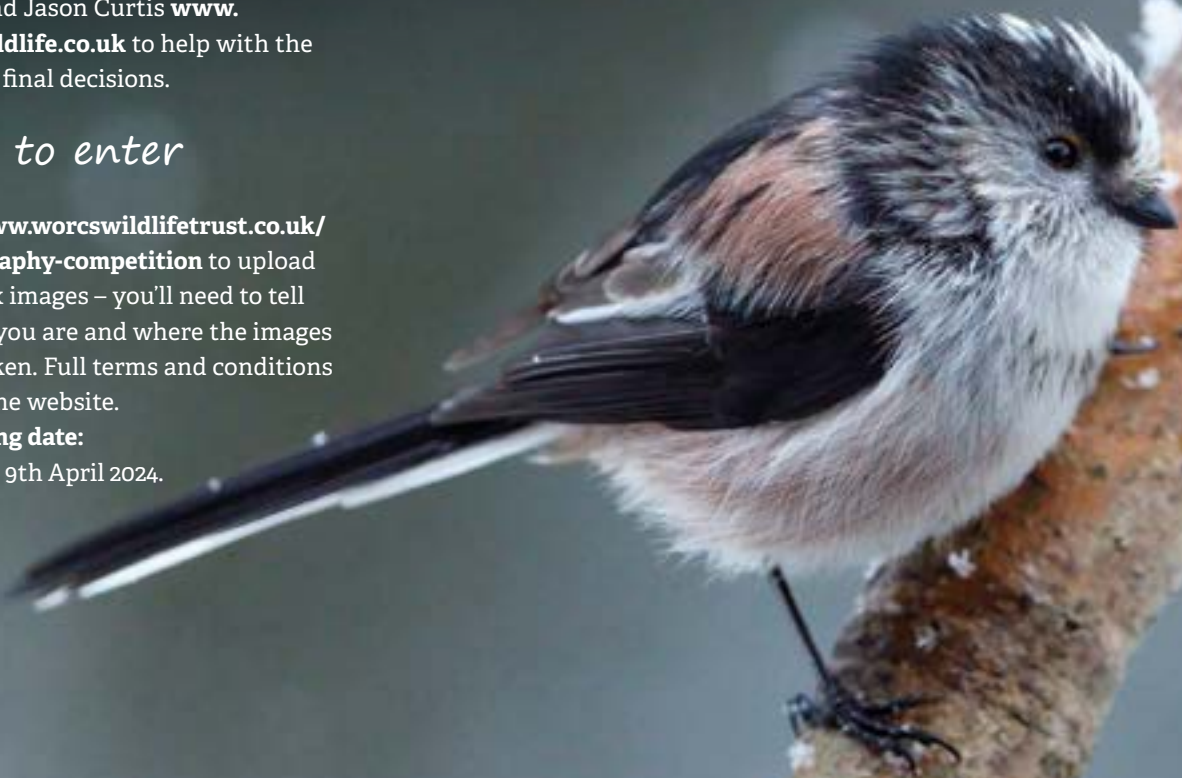
Tuesday 9th April 2024.

Don't forget:

- **Do no harm** – the welfare of the wildlife and the wild place comes first.
- **Don't get too close** – let birds feed their young and move on if they're agitated.
- **Watch your feet** – stay on paths, don't trample off-piste.
- **Know the law** – familiarise yourself with protected species and the laws that protect them.
- **Know the lure** – don't use recordings to attract birds, they can disrupt behaviour and risk the lives of chicks.

Top tips from our judges

- Learn about your subject to know when and how to safely take photos for both you and the subject.
- Try to capture the 'moment'.
- Pay attention to light, background and potential distractions in your final photo.
- Don't let the weather put you off – it might add something different to your images.
- Practice, even if it's on something you wouldn't ordinarily take a photo of.



Your letters

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

New group supports swifts

A new group has been established in Wyre Forest to raise awareness of swifts, birds that are declining in number due to the loss of insects and loss of nest sites. We plan to address this through additional nest boxes and seeking swift nest bricks to be incorporated into new buildings. Find out more www.facebook.com/groups/2915551198742263/

John Davison

Homemade hoverflies

I have a couple of home-made hoverfly lagoons tucked away in the garden. I thought there was nothing happening and was going to throw them away, when I realised there were a few pupae in the dried leaves. Five hoverflies have now hatched and been released. I have replaced the lagoons and will start some off earlier next year.

Helen Baldwin



Dean Butler

Death's drive

I found this death's-head hawk-moth caterpillar wandering across my drive.

Dean Butler



Tony Haylock

Beautiful bird

A photo of a jay at Burlish Top.

Tony Haylock



Jennie Oregon

Hedgehog haven

We put cat biscuits out every evening and have visitors every night. They come at varying times – some arriving as soon as we put the food out.

We also have frogs in a wide bucket set in the ground and counted 12 recently. We only have a small garden but back onto uncultivated land with some trees so we also get an amazing variety of birds coming to our various feeders.

Jennie Oregon

Slow-worm

In June saw a slow-worm basking on the ivy on a low wall, went to fetch my camera but it burrowed down. However, on my way back saw this one on the path.

Bill Needham



Bill Needham

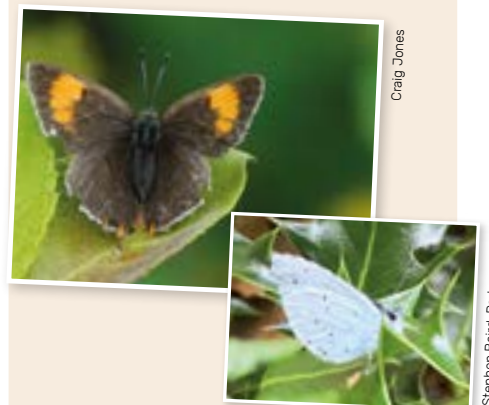
Social feeds

Just the one slightly worn female brown hairstreak seen during the work party at Grafton Wood today

@BC_WestMids @WorcsWT

@savebutterflies

✂ @Craig63Jones



Craig Jones

Stephen Baird-Parker

I've never seen as many holly blue butterflies as I've seen this year. Here's one on the holly.

Stephen Baird-Parker

KEEP IN TOUCH

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

📘 www.facebook.com/worcestershirewildlifetrust

✂ @WorcsWT

📺 www.flickr.com/groups/worcestershirewildlifetrust

📺 www.youtube.com/c/WorcsWildlifeTrustUK1

Wildlife *needs* willpower



Worcestershire
Wildlife Trust

*Can you imagine Worcestershire without wildlife?
We can't. It's what makes where we live so
special. That's why Worcestershire Wildlife Trust
is working every day to keep Worcestershire rich
in nature.*

*But we depend on voluntary income to do our
work, including gifts in wills.*

Leaving a gift to Worcestershire Wildlife Trust in
your will – however large or small – will help to
protect Worcestershire's wild beauty for generations
to come.

If the time is right, please consider us and make a
world of difference to local wildlife.

Please contact Mike Perry on 01905 754919 or email
[legacy/mike@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org](mailto:legacy@mike@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org) or
write to Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Lower Smite
Farm, Smite Hill, Hindlip, Worcester, WR3 8SZ.
www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/legacy

