

# Southeast Worcestershire Local Group

## Spring 2024 news



**Worcestershire**  
Wildlife Trust

### Birdsong

So, to start our spring newsletter, a puzzle! How would you describe the songs of birds? How would you learn and then remember them? Poets through the generations have celebrated birdsong and searched, often in vain, to describe its magic. There are fine examples from Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale* to Thomas Hardy's *The Darkling Thrush* and Shelley's *To a Skylark* - Hail to thee, blithe Spirit. In Browning's *Home Thoughts from Abroad* he accurately describes a song thrush singing -

"That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,  
Lest you should think he never could recapture  
The first fine careless rapture"

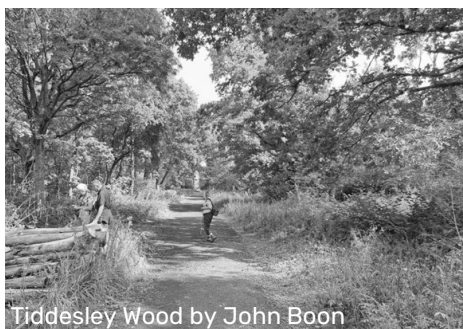
If you have the time or inclination, search out *A Blackbird Singing* by R S Thomas. Lyrical those poems might be but, let's face it, they're not much practical use.

So what about traditional field guides? Wonderful if you want to learn what birds look like but of less help if you're trying to identify a bird by its song. For example, according to the Collins Bird Guide the song of Keats' nightingale consists of trilling sounds, fluted whistles and rippling or gurgling notes; the song of our garden friend the chaffinch terminates in zitt-zitt-zitt-zitt-sett-sett-chatt-chiteriida. That is undoubtedly right but translating words into sounds that can be recognised is a challenge.



Chaffinch by John Boon

Of course, in this day and age technology can come to the rescue. There is a very useful free smartphone app from Cornell University, Merlin Bird ID. Once downloaded and opened all you need to do is point the phone at a singing bird and it will (usually) accurately tell you to what species you are listening. If there is more than one bird singing it can identify which is closest. That is undoubtedly clever but does it in some way help to make us lazy? Could we miss out on the joy of traditional field skills, the pride and pleasure of learning and remembering? Isn't it better to know that "teacher, teacher" means great tit, or that a collared dove always sings for his favourite team "united, united?" Those little tricks, once learned, stay with us.



Tiddesley Wood by John Boon

I'm sure you will have your own view but whether you are old school or favour modern technology why not join us for our Dawn Chorus meeting at Tiddesley Wood at 5 am on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> May when we will be listening and identifying the songs of Worcestershire's woodland birds. Hope to see you there.

John

## Spring Programme

We would like to thank members for the support given to our recent events. In December Tomos Holloway, the Trust's Southern Reserves Officer, talked to us about nature reserves in our area. In January Gary Farmer joined us to explain about the Vale Landscape Heritage Trust and the important work it does in preserving and enhancing local orchards and meadows. It was encouraging to meet so many of you and we look forward to welcoming you to future meetings.

As part of our new spring and summer programme we will have monthly **Midweek Rambles**. They are intended be a relaxed look at the wonders of nature, whether large or small. No expertise is required and we will walk slowly, learning and sharing the knowledge we have. All are welcome.

### **Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March Talk by Ros Anscombe**

An introduction to the Heart of England Forest

7.30pm. Admission £2.50 - Friends Meeting House, Cowl Street, Evesham, WR11 4PL

Come and hear about the vision to create and conserve a 30,000 acre forest in the Heart of England and how it's helping to tackle climate change and protect wildlife.

### **Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> April Midweek Ramble**

Vale Landscape Heritage Trust's Hipton Hill Orchard,  
Lenchwick

Meet 10am - Grid ref: SP 031 484 WR11 4UA

A walk with Gary Farmer around this 70 acre orchard looking for birds, spring flowers and, possibly, grizzled skipper butterflies.

### **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> May Dawn Chorus**

Tiddesley Wood

Commencing 5am - Meet in  
Tiddesley Wood car park, nearest  
WR10 2AD

### **Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May Midweek Ramble**

Tewkesbury Nature Reserve

Commencing 10 am - Meet at reserve car park, just off the A38, Jubilee Way opposite the  
Wheatpieces pub. Nearest GL20 5FF

This 44 hectare reserve on the outskirts of Tewkesbury is situated on the floodplain of the River Swilgate and is a mixture of flood meadow and pasture. We should see birds such as reed and sedge warblers and reed buntings as well as a variety of invertebrates and flowers.

### **Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May Photographing Wildlife with Dr Kevin Williams** Avon Meadows. Pershore

Commencing 7 pm - Meet in the free car park adjacent to Avon Meadows WR10 1EY (if coming by car the Asda car park is free after 6pm)

This fun, practical event is open to all who want to learn a little about, and get some practice of, photographing wildlife. Cameras/phones are not essential but highly desirable! You don't need big cameras and big lenses to photograph all wildlife. Providing you have an idea of what your camera can do, and what makes suitable subjects, it is possible to take outstanding pictures from a phone or basic camera. There will be experienced wildlife photographers on hand to give advice, lead the walk and try to answer questions you may have. This is an excuse to get out, observe nature and create memories.

As I hope you can see, we are building a varied programme. If you feel that you could add some ideas and skills to our committee we are now seeking to add to our number. It is essential that we form a sustainable team to carry on the work of previous and existing members. Please feel free to contact either: John Boon [john.boon13@gmail.com](mailto:john.boon13@gmail.com) or Nick Rose [nickrose01@btinternet.com](mailto:nickrose01@btinternet.com)