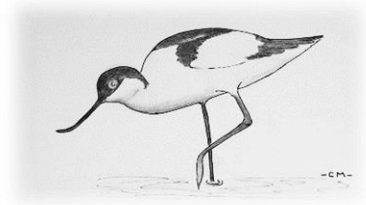




Worcestershire Wildlife Trust



Stourbridge & Hagley Local Group

Newsletter Spring 2024

Welcome to your spring newsletter

Stourbridge & Hagley local group programme
March – August 2024

Talks

At St. Saviours Church Hall, Hagley.

22nd March at 7.30pm.

Creating a wildlife garden for Gardeners' World Live
a talk by Helen Kelly and Rachel Wells (Hortulani).

26th April at 7.30pm.

Wildlife and butterflies of Scotland
a talk by John Tilt.

Walks

The Devil's Spittleful: sand, soldiers and a scary story

Saturday April 13th at 10am

Andy & Sue Duffield will lead our walk around The Devil's Spittleful and surrounding area. Meet at Blackstone picnic area car park OS map 138 grid ref. 795744.

Walk at Lower Smite Farm

Tuesday May 21st at 10am

Caroline Corsie, WWT senior land advisor, will lead our walk at Trust HQ focussing on management for wildlife and current projects. Meet in the car park behind the main farm buildings. OS map 150 grid ref. 889589.

Kinver Edge: a walk on the quiet side

Thursday June 27th at 10am

National Trust ranger Alex Murison will lead our walk looking at wildlife on the Edge and habitat creation successes. We will visit Vales Rock and Ian Williams will give us a brief history of the former residents. Meet at Vales Rock car park, approx. 1 mile along Kingsford Lane from the junction with Compton Road. OS map 138 grid ref. 824822.

A Wordsley wander

Wednesday August 7th at 10.30 am

Join John Homer on a walk to explore his local patch, walking down to the River Stour in an area of the green belt under threat from development. Meet on the car park at King George V Park on Lawnswood Road Wordsley, almost opposite the Lawnswood Pub. Post code DY8 5NA.
OS explorer 219 Grid ref. 885871.

For details of group events please visit the WWT website at
www.worcestershirowildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on

Chairman's Report 2023

Another successful year for the group. There were steady attendances at indoor meetings, although probably a little lower than pre-Covid. It was good to see a few new faces. After an enjoyable Members Evening and AGM, where the current committee were re-elected, our talks reflected the wide range of British flora and fauna, ranging from otters to beetles together with local wildflowers and amphibians.



Dominique Cragg accepting our group donation after her talk in October

Our outdoor meetings, which featured several of our local nature reserves, proved equally popular (I led a walk along the Smestow in August when the forecast was for frequent heavy thundery showers - 25 people turned up).

Our volunteers especially need congratulating for all their hard work in maintaining Penorchard Meadows nature reserve and for also volunteering on one of the Trust's newest reserves, Romsley Manor Farm Meadows.

The committee was joined this year by Chris Thomas who has come to meetings for a few years and has now reduced the average age of the committee from 72 to 65!

It remains for me to thank my fellow committee members for all their hard work over the past year as we look forward to hopefully another successful year.

John Homer

A bird (box) in the bush

As a child living on the newly built Hasbury Farm Estate in Halesowen, the go-to place for outdoor adventures was, of course, the Clent Hills. In those days, we didn't have to climb over the border between Dudley MBC and Worcestershire to get there as Halesowen itself was still part of Worcestershire! Mum and dad's preferred route, with two small children and naughty dog in tow, was to cut through the fields (where a housing estate now sits) before crossing the main A456 road. Then came the challenge of dragging us up the steep hill to where the National Trust's Nimmings car park now sits, and then onwards and upwards to the Four Stones on top of Clent. Inevitably, there was a tasty picnic and maybe even some 'salt and shake' crisps if we were really lucky! Fortunately, opportunities for walking (and the occasional picnic) around this lovely area has continued to feature in my family's lives since those early days.

Fast forward several decades and most of 'the steep hill' became part of the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's beautiful Penorchard Meadows nature reserve. In recent years, my husband and I have joined a band of willing and enthusiastic volunteers at monthly conservation work parties there, so we now know the area even more intimately than before.

Therefore, it seemed only fitting that when my dad sadly passed away last March at the grand age of 92, the collection made at his funeral should be donated to a cause close to his and our family's hearts. Over the course of just a few days, £500 was collected altogether and it was decided by volunteers and the reserve manager, Andy, that the money should be spent on new bird boxes. For many months, Mervyn, a long-standing volunteer and trustee of the Wildlife Trust, beavered away making 40 smaller bird boxes



Andy Duffield putting up one of the new nest boxes

and two larger ones. These have now been put up by volunteers and, hopefully, we will soon see blue tits, great tits, robins, wrens and more sussing out their luxury accommodation for the breeding season ahead.

Sue Duffield

Wendy's favourite recent sightings

Spectacular view of four waxwings, silhouetted against a clear blue sky on rowan berries, overhanging the pavement opposite Geoff Hills at Amblecote.

On separate occasions on the short steep-sided stretch of the River Stour, which runs between the Stourbridge arm of the canal and Wollaston High Street, through the new housing estate: goosander, a pair of grey wagtail, kingfisher and little egret.

At Fens Pool, Pensnett, amongst swans, heron, a cluster of cormorants, several goosander, a great crested grebe and a large number of tufted duck, there was a most elegant male pintail.

On January 5th, the twelfth day of the Wildlife Trust's '12 days of winter' challenge, while walking along the edge of Gibbet Wood on a dark dull damp day, my spirits were lifted by the bright glow of thumbnail sized 'scarlet elf cup' fungi nestling in moss on a fallen log.

In Bunkers Hill Wood I watched a male goldcrest holding two females spellbound as he trilled and pirouetted from twig to twig, fluffing out his bright yellow crown to show his worth.

Wendy Wilkins

Any Questions?

*I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.*

My mother wrote these opening lines of Kipling's poem, 'Six Honest Serving-men', in an autograph book that she gave to me at the age of 11 when I was about to leave primary education. This verse refers to the insatiable curiosity of children and I think that my mother would be pleased to know how much of an influence these words had on how I have approached life and, in recent years, the world of nature.

I very much enjoyed the recent talk by Gary Farmer on the topic of recording wildlife and I was most interested that he listed these very questions as essential tools for the recorder.

Who: Who is doing the recording?

What: What species is it?

When: What time of day/year is it?

Where: What is the exact location/kind of environment?

How: How is it growing/behaving/stage of development?

Why: What is the reason it is in that particular place, at that particular time?

As I listened, I realised that these are the very questions that I always find myself asking when I see anything new or interesting, and my observation skills have improved as a result. As long as you have a spirit of curiosity there is always something new to discover and inevitably one question leads to another and nature never fails to amaze. "Curiouser and Curiouser" said Alice.

Wendy Wilkins

Penorcharde Meadows update

In the latter part of 2023 the volunteer group had the welcome assistance of a group of ponies to manage the rank vegetation in the newer fields. In addition a contractor with a robo-flail was employed by the Trust to reduce the amount of bramble and small scrub regrowth. Use of this mechanical assistance means lots of volunteer effort to rake off the debris and allow light to the underlying plants.

The December work party, which usually involves jacket potatoes and party food at lunch time, was cancelled due to the monsoon-like weather conditions. The pre-Christmas celebration, therefore, became a New Year celebration...combined with much raking! This was continued in February and there is still more to do.

A big thank you to the volunteers who work hard and are always surprised at what has been achieved during the day (but there is always time for a rest and a chat). Thanks to everyone! New volunteers are always welcome.

Ian Williams



Simon raking

Volunteer days at Romsley Meadows

Andy Harris is hoping to continue the volunteer days at Romsley Manor Farm Meadows on the 3rd Monday of the month.

Provisional dates for volunteering are:

April 15th May 20th June 17th July 14th August 19th

Volunteer days at Penorcharde Meadows

Work parties are held on Mondays 10am – 3pm on
April 8th May 13th June 3rd July 1st August 5th

Current volunteers will get an email giving details of our meeting place for each work party, new volunteers should contact Andy Harris on
andyh@worcestershireswildlifetrust.org

Bring lunch and a drink for mid-morning and for lunchtime if you are staying all day.