

Worcestershire **WILDLIFE**



Worcestershire
Wildlife Trust





Welcome

Worcestershire County Council has been appointed by government to prepare the county's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). This will be the definitive spatial plan for nature's recovery in Worcestershire. It will identify priorities for action that will restore habitats and conserve species, and the measures to deliver them.

The Council will work in collaboration with a wide range of people, groups and organisations, including Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. An initial public consultation on the draft strategy was completed during January and February 2024 and further consultations will follow. Visit their website (address below) to access the latest information as well as three recently published reports in which Worcestershire Wildlife Trust has been a partner:

- **Worcestershire State of Nature Report 2023.** This identifies the challenges facing nature in Worcestershire today, presents facts and statistics on local wildlife and celebrates success stories and projects being delivered.
- **State of Worcestershire's Grasslands.** This compares data from surveys from the 1990s and 2000s and the 2021 Worcestershire Habitat Inventory to interpret the changes which have occurred.
- **Assessment of floodplain meadows in Worcestershire and their potential to store soil carbon.** This report by the Floodplain Meadows Partnership outlines the potential for soil carbon storage through floodplain meadow restoration in Worcestershire.

Finally, a huge thank you to all members who acted to object to the planning application for a major housing development adjacent to Tiddesley Wood near Pershore. Thank you too to those who sent donations totalling over £10,000 for the Trust's fighting fund, which will be used for ongoing legal and other professional advice to contest the proposal.

Colin Raven, Director



Read more about Worcestershire's State of Nature 2023 report

www.worcestershire.gov.uk/council-services/planning-and-developments/environmental-policy/worcestershire-local-nature



Cathryn Dhenau

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Luke Massey/2020VISION

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Our promise to you

We aim to meet the highest standards in how we communicate with you. If you want to change the way you hear from us at any time, just get in touch.

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Chair: Christianne Tipping

Vice Chair: David Mortiboys

Treasurer: John Blakiston

Secretary: Bob Gillmor

Director: Colin Raven

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Wendy Carter



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Andrew Morfrew

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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 six 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 sightings

We're at a tipping point

Last year's UK and Worcestershire State of Nature reports neatly illustrate how habitats are being lost or degraded and how wildlife is declining. We are living in an ecological and climate emergency. But the road to recovery is wide open; there is plenty that we can all do.

Throughout this issue you'll read about what we're doing to help nature bounce back. From inspiring children and supporting community groups to advising landowners and helping others to create habitat where they live and work, we're working right across the county to help wildlife thrive. In turn, our own health and wellbeing will reap the benefits.

Our recent membership survey showed just how many of you are feeding birds, planting for pollinators and spreading the word about helping wildlife. In fact, just being a member or donating to the Trust helps us to help wildlife. Our big ambition is to inspire, encourage and support one in four people to take action for wildlife. Small actions by lots of people really matter. This could include any, or all, of the above but one more action is to record the wildlife you see.

The UK is one of the world's most nature-depleted countries and we know this because of data. You might never have thought of yourself as a data-driven person but simply recording what you see helps others to understand more about the abundance, diversity and distribution of the wildlife that you love to watch. Meet Wildlife Sightings – by uploading a photo and a few details of wildlife you see, you'll help to paint the picture of how wildlife is doing in Worcestershire. Read on to find out more about how this exciting project is making a difference.

Thanks to you
we're checking in
on wildlife across
Worcestershire

Acorn weevil

by Cathryn Dhonau



OUR **WILD** SIGHTINGS

Lockdown. It's a word that sends shivers down spines. Those times in the pandemic when life became so different; we were confined to the world on our doorstep with just one walk per day. Roads were quiet and wildlife ventured into previously bustling places; deer were seen chilling out in a Worcester school playground. Families explored their local patch together and sought solace in being outside, happy to be almost anywhere than in the houses they were confined to. We all began to notice wildlife more.

At the Trust we produced videos, spotting sheets and other resources to help everyone, beginner and long-time wildlife-lovers alike, to enjoy the wildlife on their doorsteps. Cue our Wildlife Sightings scheme, launched in spring 2020, that everyone could take part in from the comfort of their garden or the convenience of their local walk. The project has gone from strength to strength – by reporting what you spot via a form on our website, Worcestershire residents can help paint a vivid picture of where our wildlife is and how it's doing. In turn, we help people find out more about

the wildlife on their doorsteps whilst providing a platform for people to take action for nature.

There's a list of 15 target species that we're particularly keen to hear about. These are all familiar and easy to identify, such as house sparrows, red-tailed bumblebees and moles. We're also happy to receive observations of any species and, as you'll discover below, wildlife-watchers are submitting sightings of the common, the rare and the unusual.

Insects and invertebrates

Insects are our most frequently recorded group of species. One of our targets, the easily identifiable seven-spot ladybird, has been recorded from all over the county and in every month of the year. In contrast, hoverflies and bees are proving to be more of an identification challenge but we're always on hand to respond to incorrect or unidentified records.

We have two species of dragonfly and damselfly in our target list and

Mike Averill, the county recorder for these, has told us that not only are you adding dozens of new sites to our understanding of dragonfly distribution but that many of your submissions also include valuable breeding information.

Many congratulations to those who take the trouble to photograph the 'something unusual' and send it to us for identification. In 2021 Cathryn Dhonau recorded the nationally scarce short-winged ichneumon wasp *Agrothereutes abbreviatus*, which she spotted on a path in Worcester whilst walking her dog. In 2023 Robert Brown spotted a single *Xiphydria longicollis* sawfly on a buddleia in his garden, the first record for the county.

Your records are helping to monitor changes. Hummingbird hawk-moths and box-tree moths, for example, have both shown a marked increase in numbers in recent years. After a bumper year in 2022, early 2023 spring sightings of hummingbird hawk-moths feeding on daffodils and red dead nettles demonstrated that this species over-wintered locally. Your comments accompanying records of box-tree



Hummingbird hawk-moth
by Mike Garvey

Large red damselflies
by Jeff Steady

moths show that there is hope that hungry blue and great tits feeding on their caterpillars may help to curb the march of this non-native species.

Birds

You love your house sparrows and house martins and we love hearing about them. As well as learning more about where birds are seen, your submissions often tell us extra information, such as where they nest and how many fledglings have been seen. This information helps to paint a richer picture of distribution and abundance than a mere sighting. All house martin records, for example, that have come through Wildlife Sightings are from previously unrecorded sites and 88% contained breeding evidence.

Other species recorded include ring-necked parakeets in Worcester, a black redstart in the grounds of Worcester Cathedral and a tawny owl investigating a nest box made from an old coffee table. We have received a record of an albino jackdaw and, to our delight, a turtle dove feeding in a garden.

Amphibians and reptiles

It's clear that many of you have created wildlife ponds in your gardens and welcome breeding amphibians every year. Your records are proof that a pond is a great way of attracting and supporting wildlife year-round; those of you who observe frogspawn in early spring often tell us about the dragonflies and damselflies that visit your ponds in summer. Common toads are often reported in Worcestershire gardens but breeding adults and spawn are more commonly sighted in larger bodies of water.

We have been thrilled by the number of slow-worms you've reported and the efforts some of you have made to make your gardens desirable habitats for this species. You have sent us records from every month of the year except December and we love to see photos of your compost heaps and resident reptiles.

Mammals

Worcestershire's secretive mammals make up a small proportion of your sightings and we would very much like to hear more about the molehills you see when out and about. Many mammal sightings are the result of lucky unexpected encounters, swiftly captured using a mobile phone. We've heard of urban foxes, badgers and deer in gardens, mink in a garden centre and a family of otters in Worcester. With the exception of the otters, who also made the local news, none of these would otherwise have been recorded.

Plants

There is one plant in the list of target species, a plant for which Worcestershire is something of a national stronghold, and that is mistletoe. We are building on historic surveys and are trying to monitor which tree species are favoured as hosts. Mistletoe is so easy to see in winter and early spring so your observations are adding steadily to our map.



Xiphidria longicollis
by Robert Brown



Broad-bodied chaser
by Rebekah Nash

The future

Hundreds of people have already submitted over a thousand verified sightings and we're receiving more records from more people in more places every year. Thanks to you, we're gathering a long-term record of Worcestershire's wildlife that's not just found on nature reserves but also in housing estates, suburban gardens and public spaces.

Today's common may be tomorrow's rare (and vice versa) so we hope that one of the ways you decide to help nature is to record what you see to allow us to monitor the diversity and abundance of Worcestershire's wildlife. The more records, the more of the county is covered, the better we'll be able to understand the impact on our wildlife

of climate change, land use change and more. Whether it's you in your garden or as part of a community group getting together to spot wildlife in your neighbourhood, every record tells a tale.

Wildlife Sightings also provides you with the opportunity to discover wildlife and to get to know your local patch better. Whether you're just beginning or have already stepped onto the identification ladder, we can support you from the minute we receive your sighting, from feedback to discovery and identification event invites. Some of the county's most talented and dedicated experts are part of the project.

There are lots of amazing creatures just waiting to be found. Who knows – you might be the person who finds the next new species for Worcestershire, or even the UK, almost on your doorstep.



Wendy Carter,

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Communications Lead, is especially

interested in recording bees and other insects.



Nick Packham,

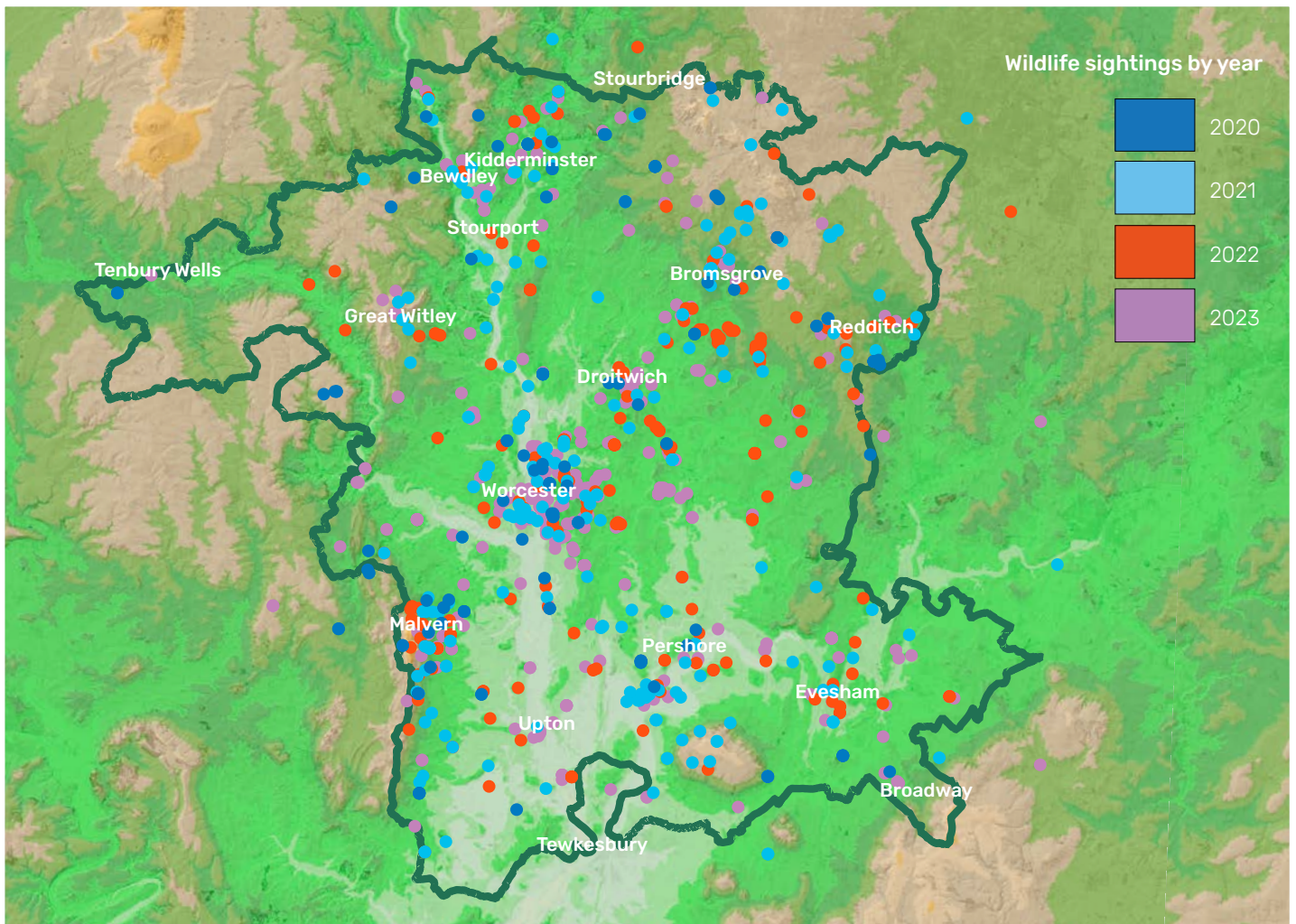
Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Engagement Team Leader keen on recording

as much as possible on his local patch in Hallow.



Diana Westmoreland,

Wildlife Sightings volunteer, a retired scientist who wants to encourage others to share their wildlife records.



Map generated using Environment Agency data, LiDAR Composite Digital Surface Model (DSM), Open Government Licence v3.0 and data collected by Worcestershire Recorders and Worcestershire Biological Records Centre. Map design © Anife Turchin/Aspect Design.



Visit our map to see how much wildlife has been spotted in your area.

Can you add to the hotspots or fill in the gaps?

www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings

Record this month



Mike Averill

Mistletoe – clouds of this semi-parasitic plant are easy to spot before trees burst into leaf. Berries are spread by birds wiping their beaks or depositing their droppings, complete with sticky seeds, on branches.



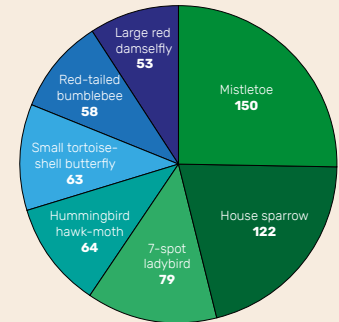
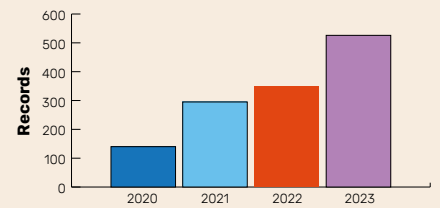
Dave George

House sparrows – our feathered neighbours rarely move more than 2km from home during their entire lives. They've suffered huge declines but garden feeders are helping to support their populations.



Jessica Nott

Moles – mounds of soil are often the only way we know these subterranean mammals are around. Don't worry if molehills appear in your garden – just shovel the nutrient-rich soil onto your flower beds.



Most recorded target species

You, your places and submitting a sighting

Submitting a sighting is easy. You don't have to go anywhere special (but you might), you don't need any fancy equipment (just a smartphone) and you don't need specialist knowledge.

- Take a photo of what you spot – in your garden, whilst walking the dog, going shopping, waiting for the bus or wherever you are.
- Upload it via our short form www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings – we'll need a photo, location and date.
- Please let us know any additional information that might help us understand more about your sighting, such as breeding success, what flowers a bee was visiting, how many you saw, etc.

A photograph is needed to verify your sighting. Don't worry, though, as most of our target species can be identified from even a blurry photo. Our form will also allow you to upload sound recordings (house sparrows, for example) as well as short videos.

A group of experts contribute generously to the scheme, providing identification or confirmation whenever a record is in doubt. Their commitment and skill at interpreting blurry photographs is one of the foundations of the scheme's success.



7-spot ladybird by Emma Pugh



Agrothereutes abbreviatus by Cathryn Dronau



Worcestershire Biological Records Centre

Wildlife Sightings is a partnership between Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Worcestershire Recorders and Worcestershire Biological Records Centre.

Local news

Tending trees, training talent

This year, the Big Give Green Match Fund goes live on 18th April, giving charities the opportunity to double donations for one week only. We raised £16,094 from last year's Green Match Fund, which is being used to train our volunteers and provide them with essential tools and equipment as well as support habitat management and creation across our nature reserves.

We now need your help again. This year's campaign, Tending Trees, Training Talent, aims to secure funds for our conservation trainee programme, equipping a keen and talented group of trainees with the skills and confidence needed to protect our wonderful wildlife and wild places. Participants in this programme gain valuable experience in a variety of conservation techniques, from dormouse monitoring to woodland management.

In addition, we will also use funds raised to help protect



ancient trees on our nature reserves. While these habitats serve as biodiversity hotspots, they demand extensive management to ensure the preservation of the wildlife dependent on them. Your contribution will play a crucial role in nurturing both the next generation of conservationists and the longevity of these vital ecosystems.

From 12 noon on 18th April to 12 noon on 25th April, you can contribute to our campaign by making a donation at <https://bit.ly/TreesTalent>.

During this time, every donation made via the Big Give's website will be matched, effectively doubling the impact!

Thank you so much for your support.

Helping swifts in Worcester

Community groups in Worcester have come together to give swifts a helping hand. A wildlife survey at Landsdowne Allotments last summer prompted a 'swift half' in the local pub to discuss how residents could help our declining swift population. During last summer members of the Arboretum Residents Association and Worcester Canal Group surveyed where swifts are already nesting in the area. Volunteers from Worcester Environment Group made swift boxes and over winter, with help from Worcester City Council, swift boxes were put up across the neighbourhood. We look forward to seeing the new nest box residents!

You can:

- Read more about these amazing birds and this fantastic project www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/blog/wilder-communities/worcesters-swifts
- Discover what other groups in Worcester are doing to help wildlife on their doorsteps www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/community-action/communities-taking-action
- If you're involved in helping wildlife in your community and would like to spread the word to people near you, why not list your group on our community map www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/community-action



Liz Yorke

Natural Networks funding increased

Funding has been increased for projects to create or improve habitats for wildlife. Over 200 organisations have already received support and funding from the Natural Networks programme, a partnership project between the Trust and Worcestershire County Council.

Grants of £1,000–£15,000, which may make up to 70% of the cost of a

project, are still available for parishes, businesses, community groups and landowners in some areas to help wildlife on their patch.

The Natural Networks team can advise and support applicants with completing the application form and creating management plans to writing specifications and sourcing quotes.

The project ends in March 2025 so if you've got a project to help wildlife on your land (it must have public access) take a closer look at www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/natural-networks

Natural Networks is part-funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Forestry Commission.

We bet you didn't know

Our native wild daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* is a great source of food for early pollinators. All daffs aren't equal, though. Despite the UK being the world's largest grower of cultivars, many have virtually sterile environments for our insects.

Discover our seasons www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/blog/seasonal-spot



Roger Plant

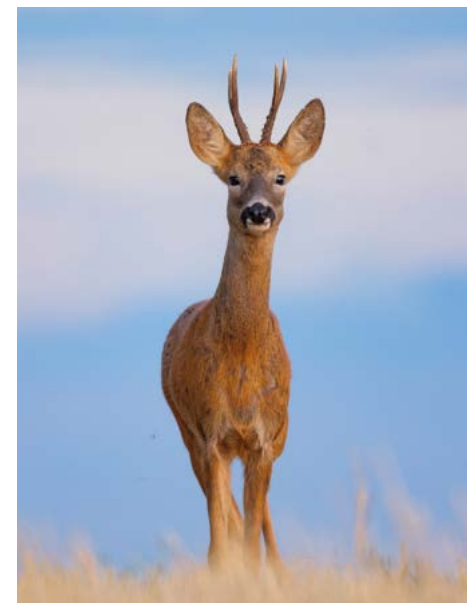


Photo deadline

The deadline is looming for this year's photo competition. Choose six of your best to be in with a chance of featuring in our 2025 calendar.

Enter now www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/photography-competition

Selection of image/s as per space available.

Trustees

We are looking for new trustees to join Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's Council of Trustees. As a trustee, you can play a major role in helping the Trust deliver its mission of nature's recovery in the county. Trustees work with the Director, other trustees, staff members and volunteers to help shape and guide our vital nature conservation work.

We are looking for up to three new trustees to join us. Find out more about the role or for an informal discussion please contact Colin Raven, Director, to organise a suitable time for a chat colin@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org.

Find out more www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/volunteering-opportunities/trustee



John Wood

Go wild in June

30 Days Wild is 10 this year! Will you be joining thousands of nature-lovers across the UK in the month-long challenge to make your life a little wilder every day? You can sign up for your free pack full of inspiration soon www.wildlifetrusts.org/30dayswild



Jasmine Walters

Restored ponds

Three ponds have been restored at the Trust's HQ, Lower Smite Farm. The farm's wetland areas are particularly important for amphibians and reptiles, such as great crested newts and grass snakes, as well as a range of birds and aquatic insects.

Over the last few years reed cover has increased and water levels have dropped. Amphibious vehicles removed much of the reed cover to increase the volume of open water. The reeds were piled near the ponds to ensure that any wildlife could escape back into the water and to provide habitat piles for the future.

As well as benefitting wildlife on site, the ponds sit near the headwaters of the Barbourne Brook so the increased water-holding capacity following restoration will also act as natural flood management.

Restoration was possible thanks to funding from Natural Networks, a partnership between the Trust and Worcestershire County Council, and the Worcestershire Working with Water Project led by Worcestershire County Council.

Read more www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/news/wildlife-helped-pond-restoration

Events near you

Our Local Groups organise walks, talks and day trips throughout the year.

Friday 22 March – **Creating a Wildlife Garden for Gardeners' World Live** with our Stourbridge and Hagley Local Group.

Thursday 4 April – **Creatures of the Twilight** with Malvern Local Group.

Monday 8 April – **Eades Meadow – Its History, Inhabitants and Management.**

Sunday 14 April – **Enjoying the Bluebells of Shrawley Woods** with Wyre Forest Local Group.

Visit www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on for information about all our events.

Digital magazine

Don't forget that this magazine is available as a pdf if you'd rather read it digitally. You can download a copy to try it out; just let us know via the short form on the download page whether you'd like to switch to receiving a digital rather than hard copy of future issues.

Take a look www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/magazineMar24



Elections to Trust Council

Elections to the Trust's governing body will take place at the AGM on **Wednesday 16th October 2024**. Nominations must be made on the nomination form, obtainable from Lower Smite Farm, by **10th June 2024**.

Nominations will require six proposers who are members of the Trust. Details of members standing for election or re-election will be circulated to all Trust members with the summer issue of Worcestershire Wildlife.

UK news

An historic year for marine conservation

The creation of the first Highly Protected Marine Areas in English water made 2023 an historic year for marine conservation. This huge milestone was achieved thanks to years of campaigning by The Wildlife Trusts' sea-loving supporters. The new gold-standard of protection will stop all damaging activities such as trawling and will help marine life to recover, benefitting fishers and boosting carbon storing habitats at sea. These special places cover less than half a percent of English seas though, so it's just the first tiny step towards better protected seas.

Marine areas weren't the only reason to celebrate last year, with The Wildlife Trusts' Marine Review 2023 also showing an exciting rise in sightings of apex predators – those at the very top of the food chain – in our seas. One species that created an incredible spectacle off the UK coast was bluefin tuna. Atlantic bluefish tuna were once common in UK waters but overfishing caused numbers to plummet during the twentieth

century, with the fish all but vanishing from our waters by the 1990s.

Humpback and fin whales, which were once more common around our coasts, also showed promising signs of recovery in 2023. Humpback whales were seen off Burhou, a small island northwest of Alderney (part of the Channel Islands) and off Cornwall. There were also increased sightings of northern fin whales, the second largest mammal in the world. Meanwhile it was a bumper year for Risso's dolphins, with 156 sightings in 2023, compared to 45 in 2022!

It wasn't all good news however, as in contrast to these wins, the global pandemic of avian flu has sadly continued to devastate UK seabirds. While there are signs that some birds are showing immunity, vast numbers have been lost.

Discover more about our 2023 marine review here www.wildlifetrusts.org/news/marine-review-2023

UK highlights

1 Very vole done

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust is set to bring the UK's fastest declining mammal, water voles, back from the brink. Half a million pounds from Natural England's Species Recovery Programme will create vital wetland habitat and restore 50km of rivers to increase water vole numbers.

2 High security

One of our most beautiful rare birds, the curlew, is to get £230k worth of home improvements at Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) Gallows Bridge Farm nature reserve. New pools, security cameras and anti-predator fencing will help to create new bespoke habitat for this endangered species.



Terry Whittaker/2020VISION

Vanishing rules leave farm wildlife at risk

Basic rules that help protect hedgerows and rivers on or surrounding farmland expired on 31 December 2023, with nothing to replace them.

These rules, known as 'cross compliance' had to be followed by farmers if they wanted to receive rural farm payments from UK Government between 2005 and 2023. To qualify, farmers were not permitted to farm up to the edge of rivers, so as to help prevent soil and farm pollution from being washed into the water. There were also rules about when hedgerows could be cut so that breeding farmland birds were protected at the

most important times of year.

Following the UK's exit from the European Union, the UK Government announced that this rule would cease to exist at the end of 2023 but that it would be replaced by new UK rules. However, no new rules are in place and the Government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has not confirmed whether these protections for nature will be maintained. Meanwhile, nature on farms is in limbo, with nesting birds in danger and our struggling rivers and streams at risk of increased pollution.

The Wildlife Trusts have joined forces with National Trust and RSPB to urge the UK Government to uphold protections for nature while providing much better support for farmers. We would like to see farmers paid to take a 'whole farm' approach to nature-friendly farming through better designed payment schemes and access to quality independent advice on the best actions that can be taken on their farms.

Find out more at www.wildlifetrusts.org/news/wildlife-risk-farms-vital-hedge-and-river-rules-vanish

Worcestershire's nature reserves

Last September Jack Reeves joined the reserves team as our Climate and Wildlife Officer. Jack has had a very busy six months or so, helping our team get to grips with the implications of a changing climate on the places we manage and cherish.

We have already seen impacts, such as much milder and wetter winters, that have made flooding on our wetter sites more frequent and heavier, while the lack of frosts has made it harder to use machinery to undertake conservation forestry. We also seem to have more frequent storms, increasing the risk to older trees and increasing the need to check tree safety on well-used sites. Future impacts may be more serious still – increased wildfire risk, species being unable to cope with warmer temperatures or suffering through the colonisation of new parasites. Jack is working on helping us understand the habitats most at risk, creating adaptation strategies to maintain diversity on our reserves for as many species as possible and mitigating any impacts through improved management. For example, we are adapting the mix of tree species we plant on our reserves to be more tolerant of warmer temperatures, and Jack will be finding us more solutions as we identify the highest priority habitats and sites.

Restoration at Upton Warren

Of course, while we plan for the future, the majority of our work is fixed on protecting what we already have. Over winter we undertook a major refurbishment at Upton Warren, thanks to funding from Natural England's Species Recovery Grant. The grant, which has so far funded 63 projects across the country, recognises that many of England's native species are under threat or in decline and need help to recover. While each project may not reverse steep declines on its own, the scheme aims to restore habitats broadly, and maintaining and improving a locally important site like Upton Warren is a perfect example.

The work involved opening up a large area called Amy's Marsh at The Moors, which had been overtaken by reed and a blanket of the non-native invasive species New Zealand pygmyweed. After removal, we've got a much larger area of open water and muddy margins that are perfect for wading birds and dabbling ducks. The work also restored some of the islands at both The Moors and The Flashes pools as well as dredging out some silt from channels to help retain water during increasingly warm summers.

Access at Upton Warren is difficult for machinery and removing material from site, so we used specialised amphibious diggers to desilt channels. This material was used to rebuild islands, which were then stabilised with coir and geotextiles to reduce wave erosion. The islands were topped with gravel to produce a durable, attractive surface for breeding birds such as avocet and little ringed plover. It may come as a surprise but one of our target species to help is black-headed gulls, which saw declines of 31% in the winter population and have been vulnerable to avian influenza.

Although the work was made difficult by heavy and extended rain when contractors were on site, we were very pleased that a bittern dropped in while we were working, showing just how valuable a reserve it is. As you read this we should be seeing the results of the work as birds arrive to breed; our fingers are crossed for a great breeding season.





Tiddesley Wood update

As you will have read on p.2, we are awaiting the outcome of the planning application for a development of 300 houses adjacent to our Tiddesley Wood nature reserve near Pershore. We own 76 hectares of this nationally important Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and, alongside concerned local residents, we have strongly objected to another planning application next to the wood. The earliest record of woodland here is from the Domesday Book and it is valuable for its ancient woodland flora, broad range of woodland birds and an impressive array of bat species. The wood is already popular and we have seen the impact of increasing visitor pressure with widening paths, new unauthorised tracks being created and the effect of dogs off leads and dog mess upon the species that call Tiddesley home. We believe the presence of 300 more homes close to the wood will add to these issues significantly as well as introduce domestic pets, such as cats, and increase light pollution. We do not believe it is possible for a development to mitigate this.

While it is important to defend Tiddesley Wood for itself, there is also a much broader principle to defend in that Government has a stated aim to protect 30% of the UK's land by 2030 to assist with nature's recovery. The work at Upton Warren mentioned above is part of this commitment and it is hard to imagine how this recovery can happen if we allow development to degrade or damage the remaining fragments of our natural heritage. We have therefore committed a great deal of effort into opposing this development and we will continue to do so as required.

Tree planting at Green Farm

While Tiddesley may be under threat, we do have examples of how to get it right, which leads nicely to an update on Green Farm, the land we purchased recently to buffer and improve another of our woodland SSSI's, Monkwood. Our officer for the reserve, Dominique, has been working hard to install the infrastructure needed for our planned ecological improvements, with improved fencing and gates to protect the trees to be planted, 185 m of newly laid hedge and

a 250m length of new species-rich hedge planted by volunteers, four primary schools and a scout group in December. Run by Julie from our engagement team, we had 89 young people from the local community and 13 adults all getting their hands and boots muddy turning Green Farm into a wildlife haven to buffer Monkwood and, hopefully, instilling a lasting love of nature and the outdoors. It's a great example of how we restore 30% of our land for nature by 2030.

As always, there is only space to scratch the surface of the work done on our reserves by volunteers and possible through your support. It's great to see our volunteer teams expand with new groups at Romsley Manor Farm Meadows and The Devil's Spittleful. If you're inspired to come and help us in one of our many volunteer roles, do please get in touch.



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

Our work at Upton Warren will help the following:

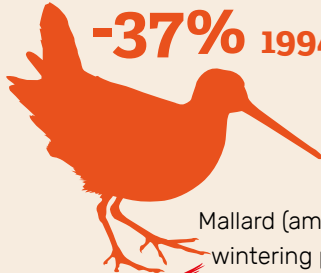
Oystercatchers (amber listed), breeding population:

-22% 1995-2020



Snipe (amber-listed), wintering population:

-37% 1994-2020



Lapwing (red listed), breeding population:

-59% 1967-2020



Mallard (amber-listed), wintering population:

-37% 1995-2020



Curlew (red listed), wintering population:

-30% 1995-2020



Listing: UK conservation status.

A new hedge being planted at Green Farm



James McDonald

Did you know?

Slow-worms have eyelids so can blink, unlike snakes.



Magnus McLeod



HIGH FIVE HIGHLIGHTS



Rosemary Winnall



Brian Eacock



Paul Manning

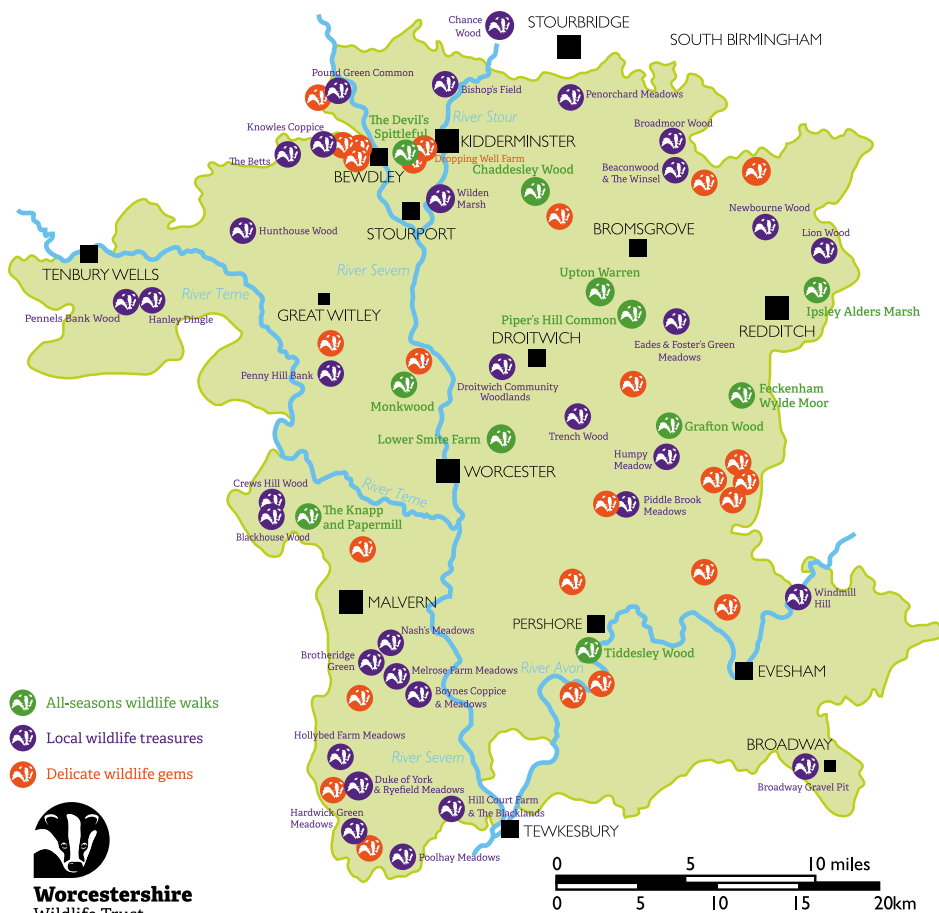


Paul Manning



Wendy Carter

1. Pussy willow for early nectar along a riverbank.
2. Bullfinch in a local orchard.
3. Early purple orchid along a woodland edge.
4. Slow-worms emerging from hibernation in an allotment.
5. Ruby tiger moth in your garden.



Adapting and mitigating climate change www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/blog/climate-wildlife

Monkwood musings www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/blog/monkwood-musings

Volunteer www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/volunteer

Worcestershire's hypnotising hedgerows

As we emerge from winter and put the worst of the grey days behind us, we can begin to look forward to spring and the glimmers of hope it brings with it – the lengthening days, swelling bird song and flashes of colour gifted to us by those early flowering plants.

On your wanderings this spring help to awaken your senses, lift your spirits and soothe your soul by taking note of the world around you and keeping an eye out for some of the early risers of the plant world, which hold the promise of brighter days yet to come. Our network of hedgerows can provide a kaleidoscope of colour.



Becca Bratt,

WWT Natural Networks Officer is always uplifted and inspired by wildlife.



Find out more

www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-explorer/wildflowers

Wendy Carter



Becca Bratt

Lesser celandine *Ficaria verna*

One of the earliest flowering plants, it can carpet a woodland floor with its shining golden stars and deep green, heart-shaped leaves. The flowers follow the sun, closing at dusk and opening during daylight hours, providing pollen for early insects. It was Wordsworth's favourite flower but, sadly, the stonemason mistakenly carved *greater* celandine onto his grave instead – a plant belonging to a completely different family.



Becca Bratt

Ground ivy *Glechoma hederacea*

This very common but much overlooked plant is, despite its name, no relation to the better-known ivy. It is perhaps likened to ivy due to its ability to cover the ground, trailing among grass at hedge bases and woodland edges via frequently rooting, overground runners. It is a member of the dead nettle family with attractive purple-blue flowers and round-kidney shaped, toothed leaves, flowering from March onwards.



Becca Bratt

Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*

Blackthorn ties with the similar cherry plum in being the earliest shrub to blossom in spring, blessing us with a show of snowy white flowers even before its leaves appear. This blossom is an important nectar and pollen source for early emerging insects, such as bees and hoverflies. Its small, oval leaves provide food for caterpillars and the rare brown hairstreak butterfly lays its eggs on its thorny twigs.



Becca Bratt

Common dog violet *Viola riviniana*

Common dog violet can be found in a variety of habitats but perhaps most commonly in dappled sunlight within deciduous woodlands. Its violet flowers have five overlapping petals that nod above heart-shaped leaves and feature a pale, notched 'spur' – a conical projection at the rear of the petals. It's an important food plant for rare and declining butterflies such as pearl-bordered, silver-washed and dark green fritillaries.



Becca Bratt

Germander speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*

This diminutive flower was once sewn into clothes in Ireland to protect the wearer during travel, hence 'speeds-you-well'. Its small, bright blue flowers are more likely to be noticed when growing en masse, scattered among the grasses like precious gems. The flower stems have two bands of hairs running down opposite sides, which is a characteristic used to distinguish it from other speedwell species.



Becca Bratt

Cuckoo flower *Cardamine pratensis*

So named because it was said to flower when the cuckoo starts to call, it's also known as lady's smock or milk maids. Its four-petaled flowers vary from rose-pink to almost white. The basal leaves with their rounded paired leaflets differ from the narrower stem leaves and when young are mistaken for those of bittercress. This pretty wildflower is favoured by the orange-tip butterfly and can be found in damper locations.



Becca Bratt

Wood sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*

You may find this graceful plant nestled in the rotting stumps of trees in moist, shady woodlands. Its leaves consist of three leaflets that fold back to the stalk at night or in rainy conditions. The leaves are edible and taste like tart apple skin, due to the presence of oxalic acid. Its five-petaled flowers are white, streaked with pink and also open and close in response to light levels.



Becca Bratt

Red dead-nettle *Lamium purpureum*

Individuals can be inconspicuous but when growing in numbers, red dead-nettle becomes more noticeable, carpeting the ground in rich, crimson tones. Its flowers emerge from the upper part of the square stem in whorls and the leaves are visually very similar to that of common nettle but lack the sting when touched, hence 'dead' nettle. This clever adaptation helps it to escape the nibbling of rabbits and other herbivores.



Becca Bratt

Moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina*

This tiny plant is known as 'town hall clock' because of its cubed flower head that features a flower on each face. Only a few inches tall, it often grows unnoticed besides woodland paths and is easily camouflaged by species such as wood anemone. Moschatel is uncommon, found in ancient woodland habitats and old hedge banks. This special plant is sure to be your star species if you find it this spring!

Severn and Wye Nature

The sun breaks through mist rising off the River Severn near Worcester and a swan takes flight. At about 180 miles long, not including its tributaries, this is the UK's longest river and a big part of life here in Worcestershire. Together with eight other Wildlife Trusts, we're making a big difference for nature in and around this magnificent river.

One in six species is at risk of being lost from Great Britain.

9 Wildlife Trusts of Severn and Wye Nature are working across a connected landscape that's 10% of England and Wales.

Our new partnership wants to deliver a greater impact for nature here, not just along the rivers Severn and Wye themselves but also in their catchments, which combine to create a connected landscape covering 10% of England and Wales.

Across the Wildlife Trust movement, there are hundreds of amazing projects to restore nature and there's much to celebrate. New woodlands, restored ponds, wetlands and streams, revitalised grasslands and heathlands rich in insects, greenspaces in our towns and cities. Despite all this hard work, it's clear that so much more needs to be done – we are only just starting to reverse the decline in nature that is necessary if we are to meet our goal for 30% of land and sea to be in recovery for nature by 2030.

It is increasingly clear that business-as-usual just won't cut it.

That's why we've been building the

structures to increase our impact, and that of our environmental partners, to deliver change at a much bigger scale.

What are we doing?

Nine Wildlife Trusts in this connected landscape across both England and Wales, plus our national body The Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT), are working together. In the Severn: Montgomeryshire down to Gloucestershire via Shropshire, Birmingham and Black Country, Warwickshire and, of course, Worcestershire, right at the heart of the catchment. In the Wye: Montgomeryshire, Radnorshire, Herefordshire, Gwent and Gloucestershire.

We're sharing knowledge and initiating large-scale collaborative schemes, focused on woodlands and water, that run across county and



country boundaries. Bigger programmes aiming at bigger change. Better mechanisms to make sure a good idea developed in one area can be re-used and scaled up in another.

We recognise that the scale of the change needed is such that we must continue to increase the focus on land we don't own. We're looking to work even more on land outside our nature reserves, working in partnership with farmers and other landowners to support them in making changes for nature.

Even as nine collaborating trusts, we need to be part of a broader approach. That's why we are bringing together as many environmental champions in our catchments as we can, to build together a vision for the landscape that we can all get behind. We're aiming to set up a forum for all the key environmental charities, national and local, who have a stake in nature's recovery in the catchments. Parallel to this we're also establishing this shared approach with our statutory partners – local authorities and the key government agencies – and

so create for the first time a unique cross-sectoral vision and programme for the Severn and Wye catchments to meet this shared challenge.

What will this look like?

Working in partnership rather than in competition, operating at a much-expanded scale, we can generate bigger schemes to restore nature.

Let's look again at the 180 miles of the Severn, adding on both large and small tributaries. Much of the floodplain is almost completely flat and largely used for arable production despite regular and extensive flooding that damages crops, erodes soils and pollutes the river itself (and, therefore, the water most of us ultimately drink). Now largely devoid of wild spaces, these floodplains should be the perfect places for strings of vibrant wetlands, grazed in summer and supporting rich insect and bird populations. Upstream in the tributaries we could introduce more natural flood

management, such as creating smaller wetlands, adding woody debris into tributaries or planting trees, that help to slow the flow of water and reduce peak flooding. Changes like these could help with our flooding problem, deliver income for farmers and transform the health of so many wildlife species.

We know we can do this. Over the last 20 years in Worcestershire we have created extensive floodplain wetlands in the Severn and Avon vales, including our own reserves at Hill Court Farm and Gwen Finch Wetland, and have been working to create natural flood management schemes and new wetlands with hundreds of landowners and farmers through our land advice teams,



The River Sever in Worcester
by Robert Green

especially through our partnership with Severn Trent. Immediately south of us Eelscapes is a landscape-scale nature recovery project to restore naturally functioning wetlands that support iconic and threatened species including European eel in the southern part of the Severn Vale.

Look at our woodlands. It might surprise you to know that, taking the catchment as a whole, only 11% of our landscape is wooded. The government wants to increase this to 16.5% but doing even that involves much hard work – working with farmers to find the realistic sites, designing the right scheme for the right place, sorting out funding so it's possible for landowners to get involved, getting schemes implemented and monitored.

In Worcestershire we already have an enviable track record to build upon. Our Severn Treescapes and Natural Networks programmes (run respectively with Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trusts and Worcestershire County Council) have already generated dozens of schemes to create or improve habitats. We're aiming to establish a 60-mile corridor

of enhanced tree cover that connects our Wyre Forest to the Wye valley and work is underway to create or improve woodlands, hedgerows, orchards and agroforestry, where tree planting can work within productive agricultural systems, alongside accessible green spaces in urban areas. We are creating new woodlands on some of our existing nature reserves and have committed to acquire a minimum of 160 acres of additional land on which we can create woodland.

Together we can

Achieving massive, urgent changes like these will be much easier with the collective power of collaborating organisations. It will be easier to build momentum and ambition. Crucially it will be easier to engage with government, philanthropists and the private sector to bring in the funds that are needed to establish schemes and reward landowners without whose cooperation nothing can happen. We have funding from The Ecological Restoration Fund and the Swire Charitable Trust to establish

a small development team who are taking this work forward apace, with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust acting as the lead body.

This is a very exciting and important time for nature across our region. We urgently need to think big and deliver more. As nature's champions, we have listened and we are ready to increase impact.

None of this would be possible without you, our members. There are about 100,000 members across the catchment, a powerful force for nature and the bedrock of all our organisations. Your support and backing enables the Trusts to function. It also means that when we speak people will listen. Through these changes we're looking to harness all that energy and purpose to restore the balance in the landscape we all love.



Colin Raven, WWT
Director. Colin's conservation career started in 1983 with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.



Hill Court Farm
by Paul Lane

Your **membership** matters

Thank you for your continued support as a member. Members really do matter to us at Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. We are proud that over 21,000 of you are members and wanted to both thank you for your support and explain more about why being a member is important and what it enables us to do.

The Trust has a duty to do our bit to help protect and restore Worcestershire's amazing habitats. The recent Worcestershire State of Nature 2023 report highlights how up to 25% of England's traditional lowland meadows that still exist are in Worcestershire along with 8% of the remaining traditional orchards. The county is nationally or regionally important for species including brown hairstreak and wood white butterflies, noble chafer beetles, slow-worms and violet click beetles.

Your monthly donations add up to be the Trust's largest regular source of annual income. Around four in five of you also Gift Aid these donations, enabling us to receive a further 25p for every pound. Most of our 500+ volunteers who support our work are also members. You enable the Trust

to reach out across the county, from our Local Groups running walks, talks and more close to where people live to giving wildlife a voice in the corridors of power both locally and nationally. Virtually all legacies the Trust receives are from members, often having supported us for decades.

Your membership really does matter. It supports our work to manage 1,250 hectares of nature reserves, our work to inspire the next generation through our programmes with schools and much more besides.

Feedback

Thank you to the 400 members who completed our survey in the autumn. You told us that restoring and managing our nature reserves are a high priority, alongside acquiring more land to restore and protect. We hope to share some exciting news with you on this theme in the summer. You want us to stand up for nature where it is threatened; defending Tiddesley Wood, for example, from the proposed housing development adjacent to the site.

We have read every comment on every question and are looking at where

we can make improvements. It's lovely to hear how much you're helping nature, whether it be feeding the birds, planting for pollinators, talking to friends or taking part in our Wildlife Sightings project. These actions really matter.

Nature needs us and you more than ever. Please continue to spread the word about us and about nature conservation and please carry on with giving nature a helping hand where you can where you live, work and study.



Mike Perry, WWT Head of Resources. Mike and family are Trust members and live in the Vale of Evesham.



'I've supported the Wildlife Trusts for the last 55 years. They are bringing wildlife back and restoring the natural world we love so much. Please support them as much as you can.'
(Sir David Attenborough)

Some of the ways you help us to help nature:

1,250 hectares
of nature reserves.

1 km of new hedgerow at Dropping Well Farm and Naunton Court Field nature reserves.

347 planning applications reviewed.

90% of ex-trainees now working for wildlife.

Some of the ways you help nature:

89% feed birds.

74% have planted or grown pollinator friendly plants.

53% participate in citizen science.

74% talk to friends and family about nature.

Wild notebook

Mustn't forget

Five things to photograph:

- Get up early and watch the sunrise.
- Follow ants and find where they are nesting.
- Visit a stream valley and smell some ramsons (wild garlic).
- Look out for young tree seedlings starting to grow.
- Listen for swifts screaming around old houses when they arrive back from Africa.

Five things to spot:

- Flowers on a lime tree (if they are not too high up).
- A damselfly laying her eggs.
- A colony of aphids and predatory visitors.
- Plants flowering between paving stones.
- A fern starting to unfurl.
- Look for creatures overwintering in cracks in tree bark.

All photographs by Rosemary Winnall

★ STAR SPECIES



Four-banded longhorn beetle *Leptura quadrfasciata*

Wandering through a May woodland, this striking hairy longhorn beetle caught our attention. Recently emerged from its pupal case under the bark of this dead stump, it posed beautifully for the photographers. It will have spent two years as a larva excavating curved galleries as it was feeding on the dead wood. It's not fussy about the tree species and has been found using deciduous trees and conifers. Adults may be found feeding on flowerheads, especially umbels, but close inspection is needed to distinguish this from its commoner relative the spotted longhorn *Rutpela maculata*.

Green-winged orchid

Anacamptis morio

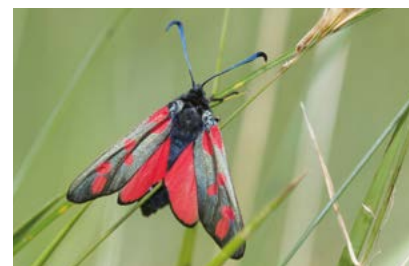
Turning onto the common we were met with a sea of purple, pink and occasional white, thousands of flowering plants – a joy to behold! We had to tread carefully as we followed the path, enjoying these orchids with their unspotted leaves and greenish veins on the upper parts of each flower.



Six-spot burnet

Zygaena filipendulae

This, and its close relative the narrow-bordered five-spot burnet, are daytime fliers and both can be found in the county in sunny flower-rich places where their larval foodplants grow. Six-spot caterpillars feed on the leaves of bird's-foot trefoil and their pale papery pupal cases may be seen on summer grasses.



Grape hyacinth anther smut

Antherospora hortensis

There are not many naturalists interested in smuts (!) but this plant pathogen is easy to find when it's present. Hold your hand under a grape hyacinth flower that looks a bit different and shake the plant; if the smut is mature, out will fall spores like cocoa powder.

Young robin *Erithacus rubecula*

As spring turns to summer newly fledged birds may be spotted in our gardens. Before they moult into their adult plumage in the autumn, youngsters can look quite different from their parents and it is easy to mix up young robins with other brown birds like dunnocks or house sparrows.



Male yellow-legged water-snipefly

Atherix ibis

What a stunning fly found beside the river! Mated females aggregate in groups to lay their eggs on a branch or bridge overhanging clean flowing water. When hatched the predatory larvae feed first on the dead females and then drop off into the water where they devour carrion and small creatures.



Wood horsetail

Equisetum sylvaticum

Invasive horsetails are unwelcome visitors in our gardens but this attractive relative with its feathery branches is only found in damp woodland flushes. Spores are produced in cones in April and May. Worcestershire is on the edge of its range, which is mainly in the north and west of the UK.

Wool-carder bee

Anthidium manicatum

I'd planted lamb's-ear *Stachys* in the hope of attracting these bees to my garden so was pleased when they arrived. Females collect the woolly plant hairs for their nests in pre-existing holes, using them to line the tube and plug each egg cell after provisioned it with pollen.



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

Gazing into the depths

A flashback! I followed the footpath through the hayfield full of flowers and dancing butterflies to the pond in the corner of the field – a favourite spot. The shallow pond edges were massed with plants – mints, reeds and yellow flag iris – all buzzing with insects. Beyond the vegetated margins clear water rippled in the summer breeze and the floating green patches of duckweed had drifted to one side, leaving a large patch of clear water . . .

On the water surface a dozen or so high-speed whirligig beetles spin in endless circles. These water beetles are beautifully designed to live at the surface. Broad flat legs propel them and their shiny bodies slip easily through the water. Their eyes are in two parts, the upper eye searches for insect prey along the surface film whilst the lower half scans animals and plants in the watery depths. When disturbed, they quickly dive to escape danger. They lay eggs on aquatic vegetation in March; the larvae that hatch are long and thin with protruding gills to extract oxygen from the water. This year's eggs will emerge as adults next August after climbing a plant stem and spinning a cocoon in which to pupate.

Pond skaters lurk by the open water

edge, standing on the water with long legs that spread their weight to dimple the surface. Their bristle-fringed feet feel movement on the surface film and when a small insect falls on the water they dash to grab it. Dinner! They lay eggs in clusters on water plants in spring and the bugs that emerge look like miniature adults.

Water measurers, thin bugs about two centimetres long, move slowly through vegetation at the edge of water, walking in a measured way as they hunt for small insects trapped on the surface film. They also catch small crustaceans like water fleas and bigger mosquito larvae that swim just below the surface. Like pond skaters, they lay eggs on aquatic plants and the emergent bugs look like tiny adults, growing through several moults.

Dive below

In the depths of the clear water an open mesh of aquatic pondweed shelters many insects. Deep down are large water beetles, higher up are other beetles and aquatic bugs, all hunting and foraging. Now and then a beetle rises to the water surface and pushes its rear end through the surface film to fill the space under the wing cases with air containing essential oxygen that is absorbed through spiracles.

Many water beetles are carnivorous, preying on other water insects, small frogs and fish. The great diving beetle is a voracious hunter, its long, thin larva even more so. The larval head carries curved fang-like jaws that fasten into any available food. The internal fluids of the victim are sucked into the larva via narrow groves on the inner side of the curved jaws. One of the small beetles is named a screech beetle because if you pick it up it makes a screeching sound by rubbing the tip of its abdomen on the rough under-surface of the wing cases. Swimming amongst the beetles are backswimmers – water boatmen – following an endless rise and descent for air.

Occasional water stick insects clamber amongst the pond weed. These are long and thin with long front legs for grasping prey and a breathing tube at their rear end that's nearly as long as the body. They crawl near the bottom of the deeper water looking for prey, climbing to take air via the tube every 30 minutes or so. They can fly and escape if the pond dries up. Nearby is the oval water scorpion, an insect with a short rear breathing tube that's often mistaken for a sting. Occasional flyers, they hunt on the bottom of the pond, climbing to the surface now and then to take air.

Darters, hawkers and damselflies that flutter amongst the flowers at the water's edge or flash by on a hunt have all emerged from aquatic larvae that lived for a year or so in the depths of the pond. The larvae (nymphs) hunt insects, small amphibians and fish by stealth in the depths of the pond. They move very slowly towards prey and, when close, shoot out an organ from beneath the mouth to grab the prey with claws and pull it in nearer to be eaten. They take oxygen from the water via gills situated in the hind gut. The water drawn in also provides an escape mechanism; if alarmed, the nymph forces out a water

jet, propelling it away from danger. After growing through several moults, the nymph climbs up a stem into the air and a dragonfly slowly emerges, leaving the larval skin behind. The aerial dragons are also avid insect hunters, catching them in the air with strong legs.

Deep in the mud

In the darker part of the pond, deep in the mud, is a waving group of red tubular larvae – the larvae of non-biting midges. They're also called blood-worms because of the haemoglobin in their body fluid that enables them to extract oxygen from stagnant water. Their constant movement brings them fresh water whilst they feed on decaying vegetable matter and eventually pupate in the mud. The pupae can swim and eventually rise to the surface where a perfect tiny midge emerges.

Caddisfly larvae, found crawling in mud, live inside a case they construct from hard mineral grains or bits of vegetation, enlarging it every time they grow by moulting. The head and forepart of the body are pushed out of the open wide end on the case so the larva can crawl about to forage for food.



Great diving beetle
by Jack Perks



Smooth newt
by Philip Precey



Water stick insect
by Jack Perks

Bigger inhabitants

A good pond is a haven for wildlife small and large – amphibians (newts, frogs and toads) breed here and birds feed on the insect life. There was a time when every pond had a nesting pair of moorhens and possibly mallards.

Moorhens nest amongst plants emerging from water. First comes the platform built of water plants, the male bringing the material and the female building. The clutch of around six eggs is incubated for three weeks, after which chicks hatch that look like small balls of black cotton wool with punkish red crowns. They leave the nest and swim within a day of hatching, following their parents around. They're fed mainly on tiny insects, gradually becoming independent and catching their own food. The juveniles are brown without the red shield and cannot fly until they are about 70 days old.

Moorhens are omnivorous, eating almost anything from insects and tadpoles to seeds and plants.

Amphibians come to ponds in spring where they mate and lay eggs. Common smooth newts have an elaborate courtship display, eventually leading to fertilisation when the male inserts a sperm sack into the female. The sperm are released internally when the female's eggs are ready to lay as clusters of sticky eggs on the broad, curled leaves of plants. Tadpoles (newtpoles) emerge in three to four weeks to feed on small invertebrates; they are long and legless with a fringe of pink gills at the neck. After about six weeks the hind limbs start to grow, followed by regression of the gill. Slowly the front legs grow and the skin thickens, becoming fully pigmented. In about ten weeks the newt is ready for life on dry land and emerges from the pond, hibernating underground during winter.

Past and future

This flashback of a few of the many marvels of a good field pond lives in the memories of my childhood wanderings when every field had a pond to provide drinking water for livestock. Each pond was rich with wildlife and many a child came home with a jam jar full of wonders. Most field ponds are long gone; filled in, polluted, vanished. Some have survived, some replaced and the creation of ponds in your own gardens and green spaces help to replace these lost wonders.



Harry Green, WWT trustee is a life-long naturalist and ornithologist.

Moorhen and young
by Joshua Copping



Create your own pond
www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wild-about-ponds

Saving sandy species

In the Wyre Forest, we've managed Dropping Well Farm for three years and the adjacent Blackstone Farm Fields for over 10. We're transforming this sandy land back to the heathland it once was, to something that resembles neighbouring The Devil's Spittleful. We've learnt much about what works for the incredible wildlife found here and as well as restoring heathland, we're also improving the heathland we already have.

The bare sandy earth underpins the plants that wildlife relies on but over the years we've lost many of them from the area. We're embarking on a new project to bring some of them back.

Some plants, such as poppies, have long-lasting seeds that were lying dormant in the ploughed soils.

Others, such as sheep's-bit, have colonised restored areas on the Spittleful because their seed is wind-blown.

Heather seed is fairly heavy so only drops a small distance. To spread further it has to cross the Severn Valley Railway embankment that separates the sites. Natural colonisation might take hundreds of years.

Other plants, such as corn marigold, were once present but are now absent.

Local botanists are helping us to decide which species we should help. Reintroductions require careful thought – are they right and have we created sustainable suitable conditions for them?

We have a trial! Tower mustard is one of the county's rarest plants and has previously grown here so is easy to 'approve'. We have some seedlings and they're helping to answer our questions – does this species need help, should we help it, where do we source it from, are there any risks, how do we propagate it and where do we plant it?

Following our tower mustard trial, we hope to assist lots of plants that either now grow in small numbers or have been lost entirely. If you have some knowledge of plant identification and would like, under guidance, to help locate and propagate the plants we chose to help then please get in touch andyh@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org



Sheep's-bit at The Devil's Spittleful
by John Bingham

Grow a delicious

Herbs have been used around the world for their medicinal and edible qualities for millennia, estimated at 60,000 years ago!

In the sixteenth century St Benedict drew up plans for how the monastic community should be laid out, which of course included a garden. This had to contain everything to sustain the life of the monks and whilst the kitchen garden provided the food, the physic garden would contain all of the medicinal herbs. Those were the medicines in those days!

Not only are herbs great for us but they also attract wildlife to gardens. Most people think of herbs for seasoning food, which of course they are excellent at doing. So, when I'm asked, 'which herbs should I grow?', invariably I reply, 'the ones you like to eat!' And that's the best place to start, as many herbs are better when they are repeatedly picked or cut, as they shoot new leaves, which are more flavoursome and potent than older leaves.

Herbs can be grown very easily in small spaces, indoors in a pot on a windowsill or outside in a window box, and adding more than one will widen your culinary additions. But do make sure the chosen plants like the same soil, water and light conditions.

An expert herb grower, Jekka McVicar, mainly grows her herbs in raised beds, easier on the back when gardening but also means she can control the soil conditions and can contain those herbs that like to spread. If you only have a border but want to grow something like lemon balm that will quickly spread everywhere, put it in a large bottomless pot that will restrict the roots.

Herbs are a gateway plant to get people, especially children, gardening as they are easy to grow. And alongside this they attract bees, butterflies, moths, birds and other beneficial insects into the garden, so it's win win. There's not much else I like better than to take a hot cup of water into the garden and pick my own tea!



Borage

Copes with most soils and dappled shade and is a magnet to many pollinators. Borage flowers look super impressive captured in ice and served in drinks.



Arit Anderson is a garden designer, writer, podcaster and presenter for Gardeners World. She is also a trustee for the National Garden Scheme, Patron for Tuppenny Barn and Cultivate London and an Ambassador for the RHS.

Illustrations by Katy Frost, Arit headshot by Julian Winslow



herb garden



Chives

A moist but well drained soil will keep chives happy, which in turn when flowering will keep many of our bees happy. The flowers are edible and look decorative in salads.



Fennel

Keep in light well drained sandy soil. Great for hoverflies and ladybirds and once they go to seed, birds can feed on them from autumn. One of my favourites.



Lavender

A sunny spot on well-drained soil is best. Bees and butterflies can't keep away! I had my first lavender scone on the Isle of Wight and it was delicious!



Lemon balm

Spreads easily so it is best to keep it in a container. Renowned for attracting bees and I grow this for making herbal tea.

Mint

Thrives in most soils, it's so easy to grow and its flowers attracts bees, moths, butterflies and other pollinators. A hardworking herb that lifts salads, sauces and drinks! Loves to spread out – so contain in a pot if you don't want a garden full.



Wild marjoram

Otherwise called oregano, it's a fantastic plant. Best in well-drained soil, bees and butterflies love it and it's great for flavouring Mediterranean dishes!



Thyme

Thrives in sun and well-drained soil and flowers throughout the summer, making this a popular herb with pollinators. With so many varieties to choose from, they're great for cooking.



Coronation Gardens for Food & Nature

For information and advice on growing delicious herbs and wildlife-friendly fruit and vegetables in your garden, visit mycoronationgarden.org

Six places to see migrating birds

Spring is a time of great change in the wild world. As the days grow brighter and warmer, millions of birds are on the move. They leave their winter refuges and race back to their breeding grounds, driven by the urge to find a mate and raise some chicks.

Cuckoos, ospreys, warblers and many more birds are returning to the UK from the warmer regions of southern Europe or Africa. They don't all arrive at once; each species has its own schedule. Sand martins and wheatears begin arriving in March but quails and nightjars are stragglers, appearing as late as May.

On some spring days, you can see migration in action, with flocks of birds flying overhead on their way to their summer home. Birdwatchers call this visible migration or vismig for short. But flying is hard work, so keep an eye out for migrants stopping off to spend a few hours refueling before continuing their journey.

Here are six of our best nature reserves for experiencing spring migration.

1. Cemlyn Nature Reserve, North Wales Wildlife Trust

An incredible site to visit on the wild coast of Anglesey, with its unique, shingle ridge. Cemlyn welcomes a wide range of wading birds and between May and July is host to nesting colonies of Sandwich, common and Arctic terns.

Where: Anglesey, LL67 0EA.

2. Red Rocks Nature Reserve, Cheshire Wildlife Trust

On the edge of the Dee Estuary, this nature reserve is an excellent coastal spot for birdwatching with sand dunes, reedbeds and marsh attracting regular spring migrants like reed buntings, sand martins and wheatears.

Where: Hoylake, CH47 1HN.

3. Spurn National Nature Reserve, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

One of the best sites in the UK for visible migration, with thousands of birds passing overhead. The adjacent Humber Estuary is of international importance for its vast numbers of wildfowl and wading birds passing through.

Where: Hull, HU12 0UH.

4. Christopher Cadbury Wetland Reserve, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

Worcestershire's premier bird-watching nature reserve, Upton Warren attracts birds throughout the year. It is home to the UK's first inland breeding avocets and is a vital stop over for lots of migrating wading birds.

Where: Wychbold, B61 7ER.

5. Walthamstow Wetlands, London Wildlife Trust

An internationally important site for migrating birds, Walthamstow Wetlands is excellent for an urban vismig. Just 15 minutes from central London, you will find a unique city oasis to connect with the magical world of migrating birds.

Where: Walthamstow, N17 9NH.

6. Rye Harbour Nature Reserve, Sussex Wildlife Trust

In spring, gull numbers increase and oystercatcher and dunlin feed along the shore and roost on the shingle at high tide. Gannets and flocks of Brent geese also return on their eastward passage to breeding grounds.

Where: Rye, TN31 7FW.



Did you spot any migrants?

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



Cuckoo

by Luke Massey/2020VISION

Seasonal pickings

For many of our familiar birds, spring is the time for long-distance migration. After spending the winter in warmer climes, which for many can be far south of the Sahara, the urge to fly north brings a wide variety of species to the country and on to our nature reserves to feed and breed.

Most obvious to everyone must be the songbirds. From April onwards millions of birds of some dozen species descend upon us, with thousands staking their territories throughout Worcestershire, bringing joy to anyone visiting our nature reserves. Chiffchaffs, blackcaps, willow warblers and others can be heard adding their distinctive voices to the chorus of our resident birds. If you are anything like me, there is always that sense of anticipation as you wait to hear your first migrant singing on breeding territory. In the skies above swoop swallows, house martins and swifts (unfortunately not in the numbers I remember as a child).

There is much more to spring

migration than just the songbirds. It also brings parasites, predators and probers.

Female cuckoos will be looking out for the nests of meadow pipits, dunnocks or reed warblers in which to lay their eggs. Although very thin on the ground in the county these days, I'll be listening for the distinctive cuckooing call of the male at Monkwood this year.

The swept-winged hobby, a red-trousered member of the falcon family, has followed its prey north; it's fast and agile enough to catch swallows, house martins and even dragonflies in flight. Join me in looking for them over The Moors at Upton Warren.

Speaking of visiting Upton Warren, you are very likely to be treated to the sight of long-billed and long-legged waders passing through on their way to more northerly breeding grounds. Curlew, whimbrel, greenshank and the occasional black-tailed godwit all use the wetland for brief rest and refuel stopovers.

The star migrants there are the avocets, which have been breeding at Upton Warren since 2003 and whose numbers have steadily increased with each passing year. Also keep an eye out for the easily overlooked little ringed plovers that breed in smaller numbers than their flamboyant, up-swept billed, larger neighbours.

With so much of our birdlife under threat, our nature reserves are increasingly important in providing a home, or a safe place to pause, for many migrant birds.

Top tip

Many small birds build nests on or close to the ground. By keeping your dog on a short lead and by staying on paths you can reduce disturbance to a minimum. Thank you.



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



Technology isn't the enemy



Children have a huge appetite for nature. There's an enormous world of wonderful wild things for them to discover, if they're given the opportunity. The right experiences can build a connection to nature that will last a lifetime.

But as children get older, there are more distractions. Interests and hobbies are more likely to be influenced by friends than parents, or by the content they view online. If nature hasn't fully captured their attention by now, that interest can slip away – though it often resurfaces later in life. So it's important that we foster that connection to nature from as young an age as possible.

We worry about children's access to technology being a blocker to spending time outside and connecting with nature. But I think technology can actually play a helpful role in breaking down barriers. As with everything, it's all about balance. Often we're out and about in nature, there's wildlife around us but we don't really know what we're seeing. Putting a name to the things we see or hear can help build an interest and there are some incredible apps available to help with that, like Merlin Bird ID. You can even use them as a family and learn together.

The way we interact with the world has changed. Computers, apps, social media – they aren't going away anytime soon. We can embrace them to spark children's creativity. You can go online and find a tutorial for making pinecone creatures or other wildlife-inspired crafts, or follow role models using their digital platforms to inspire change. We're seeing a fantastic rise in young nature activists, almost mini celebrities amongst young people. It's a wonderful thing.

The more our young people care about the environment and nature, the better hope we have for a green and sustainable future. But it's about far more than that. There's so much evidence to show that young people who have that connection to nature, who experience nature in their daily lives, are happier and healthier. There are many reasons to encourage children to pursue an interest in nature and happier children is a big one.

Knowledge of the natural world – and the state it is currently in – can sometimes feel like a burden as well as a blessing. Many of us worry about the future. The climate is changing and we're seeing huge losses of wildlife. Children are not immune to these fears and we shouldn't try to hide the truth from them. But the way we present these facts matters. It's easy to drown in the negative but that won't help to change things.

The most important thing we can do as adults is empower young people to feel like they can actually do something and that their voice matters. We can help alleviate their climate anxiety by showing them that they can get involved with doing something good for the planet, wherever they live. The best place to start is by setting an example for them to follow, in the way we view nature and the actions we take to help it. If children see the adults around them caring, listening to the concerns and taking meaningful action to help, it can be a huge inspiration.



Technology can help you connect with wildlife from the comfort of your own home. Check out our webcams wildlifetrusts.org/webcams



Dawn Cooper

Maddie Moate



Maddie Moate is one of the few family-focused 'Edu-tubers' in the UK and has been creating fun educational science videos for the past eight years, amassing more than 210,000 subscribers and over 56 million views on her own YouTube channel.

   @maddiemoate

GET INVOLVED

For ways to help the young people around you to nurture a connection to nature, visit The Wildlife Trusts' Wildlife Watch website. You'll find downloadable wildlife spotter guides, self-guided activities and actions to help wildlife and more.

Get inspired at wildlifewatch.org.uk

Your letters

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

Unusual robin

This unusual bird appeared in our garden mid-November. I thought that it may be a leucistic robin; leucism is similar to albinism but the robin's dark eyes confirm leucism.

Stella and Mike Sullivan



Pat Pitt

Ed. Find out more and report leucistic birds www.bto.org/our-science/projects/gbw/about/background/projects/plumage



Mike Sullivan

Curlew spotting

Recent visits to Upton Warren have revealed four curlews. Before Christmas there was a great white egret but my friend & I missed it by 10 mins.

Philip Ruler



Philip Ruler

Waxwing visitors!

I was lucky enough to see the waxwings in Barnard's Green, Malvern, a few days ago. I'd never seen one before. Absolutely stunning birds and very photogenic.

Pat Pitt

Ed. Visit www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/blog/seasonal-spot/waxwing-winter for more about these seasonal visitors

Winter bumblebee

A couple of photos of a bumblebee today on winter-flowering honeysuckle. It was small, not like a big queen. Will a queen be producing workers at this time of year?

John McCarthy

Ed: We do get records of buff-tailed bumblebees making it through milder Worcestershire winters. Our Wildlife Sightings project is keen to hear of winter bumblebees (see pp 4-9)



John McCarthy

Alien in the garden

I've found something rather unusual in my garden! I couldn't identify it myself so asked for help on an online group. One of the members recommended I notify you as you may be interested?

Caroline Copson


Ed. This is a very rare basket (or red cage) stinkhorn fungus. It's not believed to be native to northern Europe but at 15 cm tall, it is an incredibly impressive sight, especially in a garden!



Caroline Copson


Social feeds

Snowdrops in Astwood Cemetery, Worcester, in early January.

 **Emily Lord**



I looked up, whilst sat on a stile writing notes at dawn, to find a fox had come & sat by me!

 **@Chris4Patches**




KEEP IN TOUCH

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 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 **mike@worcestershirowildlifetrust.org** or write to Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Lower Smite Farm, Smite Hill, Hindlip, Worcester, WR3 8SZ.

www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/legacy

