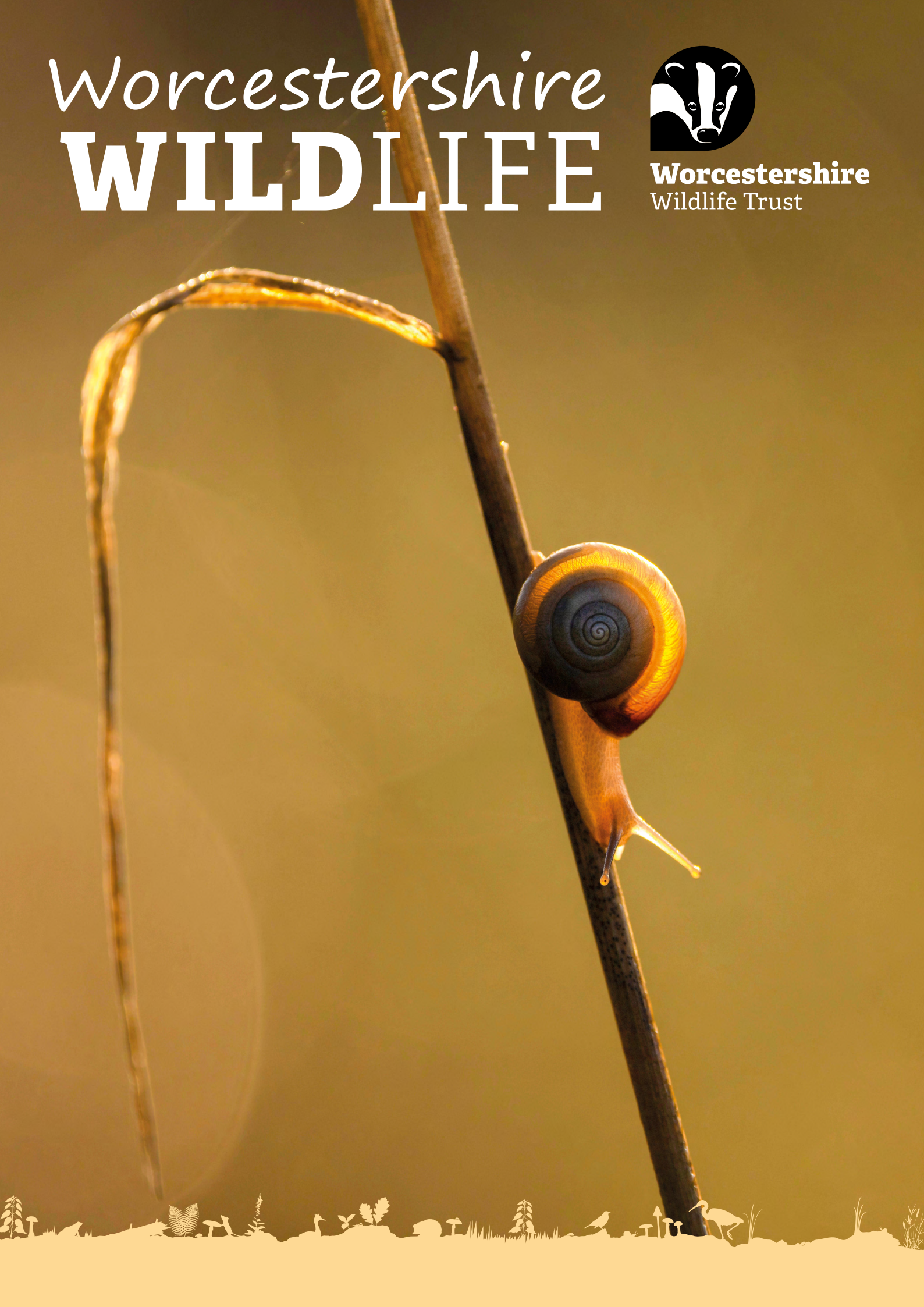


# Worcestershire **WILDLIFE**



**Worcestershire**  
Wildlife Trust







## Welcome

As I write we are in the middle of the general election campaign and, hopefully, our work locally with prospective candidates, and nationally with the main parties, will result in a better deal for nature in the next parliament.

Our asks of all candidates and political parties were:

- **Bring back the UK's lost wildlife**
- **End river pollution and water scarcity**
- **Fund wildlife-friendly farming**
- **Enable healthy communities**
- **Tackle the climate emergency**

Whatever the outcome we shall continue to work for nature's recovery in Worcestershire and beyond through our own nature reserves, by working with landowners and decision-makers and by empowering communities and individuals to take action for nature.

This issue is packed with news and information on wildlife and the work we are leading across Worcestershire. You'll also read about our latest hoped-for acquisition adjacent to our existing nature reserve at Hanley Dingle in the Teme Valley, where we will be creating a range of woodland habitats to extend, buffer and protect one of the most important woodlands in England. The land will also be important in sequestering carbon. This is the first of a number of such acquisitions that are in train and we hope that you will support our appeal to all of our members and supporters to help fund this exciting project.

*Colin Raven*

Colin Raven, Director

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Wendy Carter

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Tom Marshall

## Worcestershire Wildlife Trust *Get in touch*



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**youtube.com/c/WorcsWildlifeTrustUK1**  
**flickr.com/groups/worcestershiREWILDLIFETRUST**  
**instagram.com/worcswt**

### 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  
**Head of Conservation:** Helen Woodman  
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*Discover the rest of the team on our website.*

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Jon Hawkins/Surrey Hills Photography

Chris Farman

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## Six ways to get involved with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

**Donate** From purchasing land to protecting wildlife, exciting projects near you need your support. [worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/donate](http://worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/donate)

**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](http://worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/volunteer)

**Local groups** Join one of our six local groups to help make a difference and meet like-minded people. [worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/local-groups](http://worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/local-groups)

**Events** Discover Worcestershire's wildlife while meeting like-minded people [worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on](http://worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on)

**Shop** Check our online shop for cards, calendars and gifts – all proceeds help our work. [worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/shop](http://worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/shop)

**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](http://worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/legacy)



# Our wild county





**Caring about wildlife can be hard! There are endless stories about the ongoing ecological and climate emergencies and it's hard not to get downcast.**

Last year's UK State of Nature Report tells us that one in six of 10,008 species assessed are threatened with extinction and over 50% of our wildflowers 'have been lost from areas where they used to thrive'. Worcestershire's own State of Nature Report charts ongoing declines too – 85% of orchards lost since 1950 and 123 hectares of 'nice' grassland lost

since 2011, for example – despite our best efforts to halt the damage.

The effects of a changing climate will make matters worse for much of our wildlife, so it's essential we secure a step-change in effort and ambition if we're serious about nature's recovery. Fortunately, our farm advisory work and landscape-scale projects like Natural Networks and Severn Treescapes demonstrate that we can do something meaningful to head off the apparent disaster.

Working in partnership with landowners and other bodies to restore habitats, increase landscape connectivity and reduce pressures from intensive land management

is already showing dividends, as burgeoning brown hairstreak and otter populations demonstrate. Happily, some recent colonisers, like ivy bees and little egrets, appear to benefit from the changing climate and buck the trends above. For others, however, the situation looks bleak; long distance migrants like spotted flycatcher and turtle dove face almost insurmountable odds after they leave our shores and their numbers continue to drop. However, even in those cases we can take positive conservation action to help increase breeding success in Britain and offer the best chance possible to those that do make it back.

Thanks to you  
we're working with  
landowners across  
Worcestershire to  
help wildlife



**Securing nature's recovery isn't going to be easy. It will take advocacy, technical knowhow, partnership working and financial incentives. It will need land for restoration and buy-in from landowners. It will require the political will to drive forward change and to pay for it from the public purse.**

Put simply, it's going to need the concerted efforts of a wide range of players that are both committed to the cause and to working together. As the county's leading nature conservation charity, we will be at the heart of those groupings in Worcestershire, working with others to stem the ongoing declines in wildlife and re-build our fragmented landscape to ensure a better chance for wildlife across the county.

'Across Worcestershire' is a pretty challenging scale to operate on so we'll be working with others to prioritise actions that deliver the greatest benefit most expediently. That's vital if we are to marshal limited resources while still delivering the step-change in habitat restoration we need. Our input into the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) will aim to help guide

strategic decisions about land use, including development and agriculture, focussing on the best possible outcomes for wildlife. A key element of the strategy is to address decades of habitat fragmentation and seek to re-build links in the landscape so that wildlife can move more freely and colonise new areas. This is fundamental because one of the most pressing issues facing wildlife today isn't ongoing habitat loss, it's the fact that remaining habitat is in small, isolated patches, often in otherwise hostile (to wildlife) landscapes.

We know that where an 'island' of habitat is small it is less resilient to change and more exposed to harms that can affect its species. Examples could include insects in a small woodland exposed to pesticide drift from surrounding agriculture or a tiny urban grassland at risk from vandals' fires. In both cases, no matter how well managed the sites are, they will be at risk of losing wildlife as a result of external effects that are unpredictable and often impossible to guard against. These risks are somewhat mitigated

by habitat simply being larger but also by close proximity of the patch to similar habitats - movement away from harm and/or re-colonisation after damage both become more likely where habitats are closer together. Even with the best management, relatively small patches like our nature reserves, Local Wildlife Sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest are always at risk. The best way to protect and enhance wildlife is to increase the size of the existing sites, add new ones and make sure they are as close as possible to similar habitat - this really matters to some of our most precious species.

### Green jewels

The wonderful, and perfectly named, noble chafer is a species with very precise habitat requirements. These beetles like rotting timber, mostly in old fruit trees, of just the right size, temperature and wetness. The larvae live in this timber before emerging as jewel-like adults looking for flowers on which to feed. Worcestershire is a national stronghold for them,



Noble chafer

Eleanor Reast



Turtle dove

Wendy Carter



so maintenance of our traditional orchards is a priority. However, even with good custodianship of existing sites by the Trust and other owners the beetle is still at risk as orchards are lost or trees die and aren't replaced in the wider landscape. As a tubby and not especially aerodynamic little thing, a beetle can only get so far across hostile countryside before needing to find somewhere to settle down; it's a perfect example of a species that can only thrive in the long-term where sites are in close proximity. Planting new 'stepping stone' orchards close to existing sites is vital and the Trust and partners are actively delivering these through current projects like Severn Treescapes and Natural Networks.

Similar rules exist for those species capable of recovering on their own if we can only reduce the pressures of intensive land management. Brown hairstreak butterflies, with a population centred on Grafton Wood nature reserve, have expanded their range across the surrounding landscape and can now be found at the Trust HQ, Lower Smite Farm, some

8km away. While we manage the two reserves in a way that safeguards the butterflies, their expansion across the farmland between them is due to the hard work of partner organisations like Butterfly Conservation and the essential buy-in of landowners willing to alter their hedge management regime to maintain suitable egg-laying habitat.

Nature conservation can't be done solely within discreet protected sites, we need landscape-scale interventions and ecological corridors and stepping stones to connect up existing hotspots. This is especially important because sites with legal protection and appropriate management are relatively few in number. Maintaining excellent working relationships with partner organisations and landowners who manage land outside designated areas is crucial for success. Effective engagement is needed at all levels, from Trust officers working with landowners on the ground to our colleagues seeking to influence Government decisions.

## Otterly successful

None of this is new thinking. The Trust has championed a landscape-scale approach for decades and we've been working collaboratively at that scale for many years. Previous partnerships with the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water focussed on restoring rivers and working to bring back the otter, which had gone extinct in the county by the 1980s.

Multiple angles of attack were needed to secure the recovery of the species. Conservationists applied pressure to make sure that Government banned harmful pesticides in water, efforts by many bodies delivered improvements in river quality and changing social attitudes helped reduce direct persecution of otters. Surveys in the 1990s demonstrated some recovery and the Trusts' Otters and Rivers Project helped to install thousands of holts, safe resting places for otters, across the country. This simple intervention helped provide otters with space away from disturbance, improving the chances of breeding and population



Otters



## OUR WILD COUNTY

expansion. The creation of riverside habitat, including through the Severn and Avon partnership in the early 2000s, further improved the species' options in Worcestershire and now otters can be found on every river catchment in the county.

## Lifeboats and reservoirs

Creating new habitat patches is clearly key to success but we cannot lessen efforts to maintain the quality of existing areas either. Unintentional

pressures on nature take many forms but any activity that reduces the quality of a habitat will suppress the species that use it. Direct damage, such as bluebells disappearing as a result of path widening by human feet, or indirect harm, like a slow reduction in breeding success in birds due to disturbance, can be insidious and ultimately very significant.

This problem is compounded when resources to control damage or improve management are limited or where expertise is in short supply. The Trust actively supports landowners by providing management advice

and campaigns at all levels for better funding for positive habitat management. Good management is vital if the few fragments of remaining species-rich habitat are to be more than just lifeboats for remaining wildlife. To act as reservoirs from which species can recolonise enhanced nearby countryside, they must provide shelter and enough food to allow populations to grow and ultimately spill into new places.

This is most acutely the case where species are already on the edge of extirpation (going extinct in a particular area). Turtle doves and

## Worcestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are designed to promote and secure the best results for nature conservation at a local scale. They should directly influence regimes like local authority Development Plans and Government funding and so must be drawn up in collaboration with stakeholders across a wide range of sectors, which includes engagement with the public. We are working closely with the County Council and others on the development of Worcestershire's LNRS to make sure that it promotes the best results for wildlife locally. We'd urge everyone to have their say during the consultation on this important document later this year.

[www.worcestershire.gov.uk/council-services/planning-and-developments/environmental-policy/worcestershire-local-nature-recovery-strategy](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/council-services/planning-and-developments/environmental-policy/worcestershire-local-nature-recovery-strategy)

**Worcestershire covers**

**174,000 ha,**  
our 115 SSSIs cover just

**3,701 ha**

Brown hairstreak



Curlew

Jane Henderson



curlews are down to a handful of pairs in the county and without action to protect nests from disturbance and deliver sensitive management of their breeding sites they will certainly be lost from Worcestershire in the future. Neither of these birds are concentrated in nature reserves here so, once again, a landscape approach and working with landowners and partners is vital.

Professor Sir John Lawton summed up the approach in his seminal report to Government *Making Space for Nature*: 'What needs to be done to enhance the resilience and coherence of England's ecological network can

be summarised in four words: *more, bigger, better and joined.*'

To secure nature's recovery we cannot depend on a few nature reserves or the good work of a few landowners. We need to come together and deliver at scale and in collaboration with all sectors of society. The beauty of this approach is that everyone can play their part. If you're keen to pop up a nest box - for bees or birds - please do but don't forget to provide feeding opportunities too, if you'd like to advocate better management of a local greenspace speak to your local councillors and if you'd like to keep

wildlife safe on our nature reserves please act responsibly and try to encourage others to do so too.



Find out more:

[www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/)

**our-projects**

[www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/)

**wildlife-gardening**

[www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/)

**community-action**



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

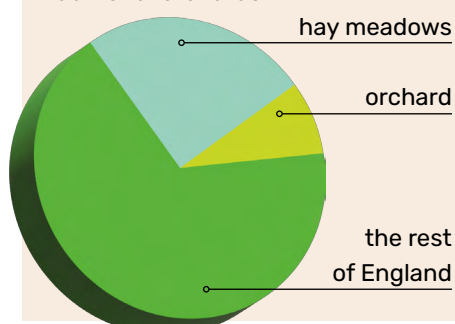
## Making management count at home

A blue tit chick needs around 100 caterpillars per day. With a brood of 10 or more chicks, the adults have their work cut out to find these, feed themselves and brood the young in poor weather. Making sure there's plenty of natural food available near nesting sites is essential; good habitat management that provides lots of food in a relatively small space helps to reduce pressure on the adults, improve breeding success and, ultimately, grow populations. Thanks to all sorts of factors (including bird tables) blue tit populations have risen by almost 30% since 1967.

**Worcestershire has about:**

**25%** of England's remaining lowland hay meadows

**8%** of England's traditional orchards



Blue tit with caterpillar

Wendy Carter



# Local news

## Wilder communities

We're delighted to have been awarded £250,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to extend our work with communities. The funding will allow us to work with new and existing community groups along the rivers Salwarpe and Severn corridor from Kempsey to Droitwich Spa.

Our new team of three can't wait to get started on this exciting project that builds on the work so far done in and around Worcester. We'll be able to support even more groups to help

wildlife on their patches, whether that's allotments, neglected green spaces or areas around faith or other community buildings.

Julie, Connor and Lucy will be on hand to inspire people about the wildlife they share their neighbourhood with as well as advise on how best communities can help nature. On top of this, they'll be able to provide support on how to set up and run a successful community group, how to attract and retain volunteers, run events and more.

If you'd like to help nature where you are – whether there's nothing happening or there's a really active local group – please do get in touch as we'd love to hear from you.

You can find out more about our work to help communities to help wildlife at [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/community-action](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/community-action).

There's also a great map on this page to help you connect to other groups – do take a look.



Worcester Arboretum  
community space

Liz Yorke



## Community team

Community Payback teams have been successfully working at The Devil's Spittleful nature reserve for a number of years.

Community Payback is a court-ordered sentence for convicted offenders who must complete anything from 40 to 300 hours of unpaid work within 12 months. Under the direction of a Probation Supervisor, groups support our work during autumn and winter, often removing broom and silver birch saplings to keep the open nature of the heathland.

Stan Reeves Project Coordinator Community Payback commented, 'We're very grateful for the on-going support and opportunity to work here. Our offenders get to learn new skills and can visibly see the difference their work makes whilst visitors can see our groups making a positive difference and our offenders paying back the community for offences committed.'



## Wild family fun

Families can go wild with excitement during a monthly Sunday morning of play and wildlife discovery. Wildlife Watch has relaunched at Lower Smite and will take place between 10am and noon on the third Sunday of the

month. The sessions are aimed at five- to eleven-year-olds but younger children are welcome.

For more information, visit [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/events?type=1955](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/events?type=1955)

## Digital magazine

Your 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/magazineJul24](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/magazineJul24)



## New wheels

Thanks to Trevor Smith for donating his Mazda pick-up truck to our reserves team. His donation was timely as one of our older vehicles was on its last wheels! Trevor is a long-standing member and ex-volunteer reserve manager of Brotheridge Green Old Railway nature reserve.

## Pass it on

What do you do with your magazine when you've read it? Why not pass it onto family and friends and help to spread your love of wildlife!

If you've been passed this magazine, we hope you've enjoyed it. Should you wish to join the Trust and support wildlife across the county, you can do so online [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/membership](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/membership) or give us a call on 01905 754919.

## A Worcestershire wild life

Many thanks to Evesham poet Bob Woodroffe who is donating the proceeds from the sale of his new book to the Trust. Bob's collection of nature poetry celebrates the wildlife of Worcestershire in all its glory.

The 78-page paperback, which contains 50 poems, is priced at £5 and is available from Bob's website [www.greenwoodpress.co.uk](http://www.greenwoodpress.co.uk) (free of charge deliveries/collections are available in the local area by arrangement, contact [bob.woodroffe@outlook.com](mailto:bob.woodroffe@outlook.com)).

## AGM

Our AGM is taking place at Lower Smite Farm on Wednesday 16 October from 7.30pm. Following the AGM, enjoy a talk by this year's Worcestershire Wildlife Medal recipients. See page 24.



## Events near you

There are plenty of walks, talks, day trips and activities taking place across the county:

Saturday 27 July – **Moth trapping at Trench Wood** with our Redditch Local Group.

Wednesday 7 August – **A Wordsley Wander** with our Stourbridge and Hagley Local Group.

Sunday 18 August – **Wildlife Watch** at Lower Smite Farm.

Thursday 22 August – **Open wildlife garden**, Lower Smite Farm.

Thursday 5 September – **The Nature of Highgate Common** with our Wyre Forest Local Group.

Monday 9 September – **Wildlife and work at Upton Warren Wetland Reserve** with our Bromsgrove Local Group.

Thursday 3rd October – **Discoveries on the doorstep: unseen, unloved and underappreciated** with our Malvern Local Group

Wednesday 9th October – **Avon Meadows: making space for wildlife** with our Southeast Worcestershire Local Group.

Visit [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on) for information about all our events.



## We bet you didn't know

At 65mpg, swifts are the fastest bird in level flight. We've worked with artist Juliet Mootz and the team at the Worcester Plinth to produce this wonderful sculpture which was on display in Worcester from April to July.

[www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/news/swift-drift-new-sculpture-worcester](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/news/swift-drift-new-sculpture-worcester)

## Upton Warren permit

Members get free entry to Upton Warren wetland reserve but non-members have to buy a day permit. The funds from the permit help us to manage this wonderful wetland reserve for the benefit of both wildlife and the people that go to watch it. We've not increased the price of the

day permit for more than 15 years but costs to manage the reserve have risen dramatically in this time. From 1 September, therefore, the cost of a day permit for non-members will rise from £3 to £5. Permits can be bought from our online shop, the Boatshack Café or a volunteer onsite.

## Flashback

Cranes were seen on Hill Court Farm on two separate occasions this spring. Seeing these majestic wetland birds on the scrape on what was once Worcestershire's largest and most important wetland harked back to a different past. In *The Botany of Worcestershire* (1867) Edwin Lees reported 'in autumn the marsh is covered with geese, and the ground white with feathers presents a strange barren aspect amidst the cultivated country that slowly advances upon its lessening borders.'

Thanks to your support, we have been restoring wetland and meadow



Tomos Holloway

habitat at Hill Court Farm for over 20 years with the creation of new pools and scrapes as well as the creation of wet grassland and reedbeds. During the same period, numerous conservation charities have been helping crane populations to re-establish themselves in the UK.



Eleanor Reast

## Rare discovery

A rare beetle has been spotted at The Knapp and Papermill nature reserve. The Trust's Eleanor Reast spotted a rugged oil beetle *Meloe rugosus* on a visit in early April. It's believed to be the first time this under-recorded beetle

has been seen on the reserve. Larvae (known as triungulins) of oil beetles feed on the pollen and larvae of solitary bees but adults eat the leaves and petals of plants.

Oliver Carpenter



# UK news

## The Great Big Nature Survey

Last year The Wildlife Trusts launched the Great Big Nature Survey, calling on the UK public to share their views on some of the most important issues affecting people and wildlife. We asked questions like: How often do you get out into nature? Should people try to control nature to better protect it? How important are green spaces to you? What roles should people, business, and government have in looking after nature?

The Great Big Nature Survey helps to identify what people in the UK really think about wildlife and how we, as a society, should protect it. The results also support The Wildlife Trusts when holding the UK governments to account over their environmental policies and priorities, in this election year and beyond.

Whatever your views on nature, however important (or not) it is to you, join more than 21,000 people that have already taken part and make your voice heard by taking the Great Big Nature survey today. If you've taken the survey before, thank you! Do please take it again, so that we can track how people's views on these important issues have changed over time.

Have your say at [www.wildlifetrusts.org/great-big-nature-survey](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/great-big-nature-survey)



Alan Price

## Making Friends with Molluscs

The Wildlife Trusts have joined forces with the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) to publish a new *Wild About Gardens* guide, 'Making Friends with Molluscs'. The guide reveals the fascinating world of slugs and snails and challenges common myths about these creatures. For example, did you know that the majority of the 150 slug and snail species in the UK can actually positively contribute to your garden ecosystem?

One of their most significant roles is as nature's clean-up crew; molluscs feed on rotting plants, fungi, dung and even carrion, helping to recycle nitrogen and other nutrients and minerals back into the soil. They can also clean algae off the glass of greenhouses, leaving behind their trademark trails.

Many of our much-loved garden visitors, including frogs, song thrushes, and some beetles, rely on slugs and snails as a key food source. By supporting these molluscs, gardeners indirectly support a diverse array of wildlife too.

For more information visit [www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk](http://www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk)

## UK HIGHLIGHTS

Discover how  
The Wildlife  
Trusts are  
helping wildlife  
across the UK



### 1 Strawberry Hill Forever

The Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs and Northants is a step closer to securing ownership of the uniquely special Strawberry Hill, thanks to generous funding from Biffa Award. Securing the future of a Bedfordshire farm that has been left to rewild for 25 years represents one of the most exciting land transactions in the Wildlife Trust's history. [www.wtru.st/BCN-Strawberry-Hill](http://www.wtru.st/BCN-Strawberry-Hill)

### 2 Booming Success

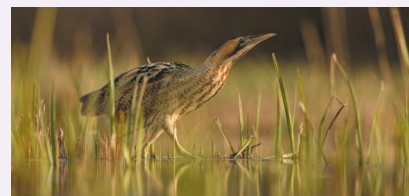
Prompted by the near-extinction of a member of the heron family, a long term conservation project by Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and conservation partners has doubled the area of bittern-suitable reedbed habitat. With a breakthrough this year, the first male bittern in recent history was recorded 'booming,' making its mating call on Amwell Nature Reserve.

[www.wtru.st/Herts-bittern](http://www.wtru.st/Herts-bittern)

### 3 Sula Rules The Waves

Alderney Wildlife Trust has recorded its seabird life in more detail than any other island, all thanks to Sula, the wildlife survey boat. Now, Sula needs sponsorship to support her important role in advancing conservation. Her next voyage is to help monitor the island's grey seals, protect guillemot colonies and map Alderney's tidal flow and marine habitats.

[www.wtru.st/Sula-Sponsorship](http://www.wtru.st/Sula-Sponsorship)



Jamie Hall





# Worcestershire's

**What makes a rainforest? Not a question that you often hear in a Worcestershire context as our thoughts naturally slide to tropical jungles. There are, however, temperate rainforests found in Ireland and on the west coast of the UK. One definition might be high rainfall, cool average annual temperatures and high humidity, a**

**closed canopy of broad-leaved trees that regenerate in shade and an understorey of mosses and ferns.**

Hanley Dingle in the Teme valley certainly gives this impression, a landscape of largely inaccessible springs and shady streams, rich in ferns and buzzing with insects. As with many of these last patches of wilderness managed by

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, this Site of Special Scientific Interest is relatively small at 22 hectares and unconnected to other woodland; we're always looking to protect, expand and connect up these amazing places.

We are, therefore, very pleased to have the opportunity to purchase 16 hectares of neighbouring land, to restore it to a mix of scrub and





Don Cragg

# nature reserves

trees and to join up Hanley Dingle with the next big block of woodland. As with previous purchases, we have received the help of the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation who have taken on the land to allow us time to fundraise to buy the land and protect Worcestershire's rainforest.

We already have a design to take the low-grade agricultural land

currently being used for crops and create a landscape of closed canopy woodland with areas of emerging scrub and open sunny glades. While this area is bordered by a stream, the main part of the land lacks the steep valleys of the dingles. The large new blocks of trees will create a corridor of mature closed canopy woodland, while the addition of scrub and,

eventually, wildflower-rich grassland will create new opportunities for shrub-nesting birds and new species of invertebrates, further enriching this already special place.

Please keep an eye out for our campaign, Protecting Worcestershire's Rainforest, and please support this amazing opportunity if you can.



## Success and a challenge

The expansion of a nature reserve is very exciting for our team, and absolutely essential if we are to increase the resilience of our wild places, but we never lose sight of the work needed to maintain what we already protect. So it's great to report that after last winter's improvements at Upton Warren we resumed our upward trend on avocets at The Flashes, with a peak of 68 individuals recorded at this most inland breeding colony at the time of writing.

Summer also gives us the opportunity to undertake repairs to the access track at The Knapp and Papermill. The heavy and prolonged wet conditions over winter have caused part of the footpath by the river to slump away. More concerningly, the saturation of the ground has again caused cracks to appear in the main track down to the orchard, despite repairs in 2021. This is our only way into the reserve for vehicles and, with wet winters likely to become a regular feature thanks to our changing climate, has serious implications for management if we cannot find a solution. We are investigating a way forward but due to the steep bank the track runs along it is likely to be expensive.

## Blooming beautiful

By this point in the year our many wildflower meadows are in full bloom and beginning to go to seed and we are ready to take hay. Some of this is taken and spread onto other places to allow the collected seed to create new meadows; we usually do this on two or three reserves annually. Last year we did this on Nash's Meadows,

near Upton upon Severn, and we are looking forward to surveying the fields to see what new species might appear. These fields have been in transition since we acquired them in 2017 and the change is slow and steady, as expected. It can take decades to establish a rich wildflower meadow but we can accelerate the process by introducing hay from nearby reserves.

Not all our grasslands are managed by hay cutting and some of our richest sites, often too wet to get machinery on, exist purely through grazing with livestock. As they can be difficult to get about on, they are often among our least visited but summer is the perfect time to celebrate them.

Ipsley Alders Marsh, as you'd expect from the name, provides the perfect watery habitat for dragonflies. This fen meadow is waterlogged for the majority of the year and, with its network of ditches, ponds and brook, is home to over 14 species of dragonfly and damselfly. The best time to visit is in June and July when you might see our chunkiest dragonfly, the emperor, with its bright blue and green body, or the broad-bodied chaser that, after quick dashes to hunt for insects, returns to rest at the same spot to obligingly be photographed.

## Bunny benefits

You'll have read about how important grazing our grasslands reserves is and we work with a wide range of local farmers to achieve this with cows, sheep and horses. This year we are considering the impact of rabbits on our heathlands and whether we can support the population there. Rabbits are an introduced species although, having been around since probably Roman times, they're arguably a naturalised

one. While the impact rabbits can have is modest compared to a herd of cows or sheep, their localised grazing around their burrows does create an unusually low carpet of grasses, and the scrapings and holes that can be unwelcome in your back garden are excellent areas for heathland plants like heather to take root and become established. While we don't plan for rabbits to become a major component of our grazing regime across our reserves, on our heathland we are looking at whether it is possible to expand their range by ensuring there are safe places to lay-up, such as brash piles around existing warrens. We will monitor the effect of our rabbit refuges and see whether there is a positive impact on the establishment of the heathland.

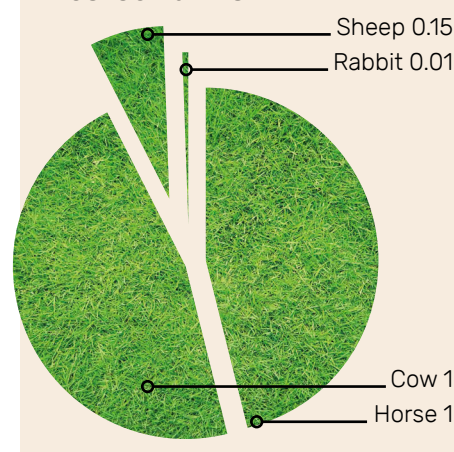
## A bug for bugs

Finally, thank you to everyone who attended our May bioblitz at Green Farm and Monkwood. Monitoring species after we put in place new management is vitally important and if anyone got the bug for surveying bugs (or any other flora or fauna), we'd always like to hear from you to support us in gathering information about what is on our reserves.



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

### Grazing pressure of different species expressed as livestock units:



Tomas Holloway



## Did you know?

Emperor dragonflies can reach up to 30 miles an hour and accelerate with such power that they experience the same kind of G-force as a jet fighter pilot!



## HIGH FIVE HIGHLIGHTS



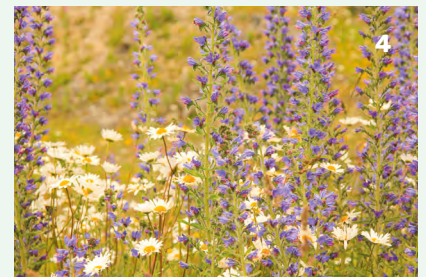
Mike Snelle



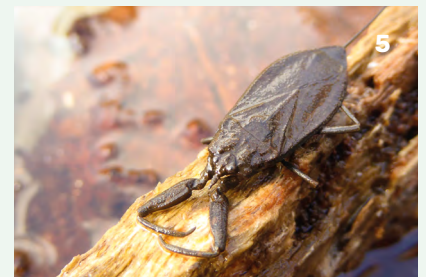
Duncan Locke



Pete Walkden

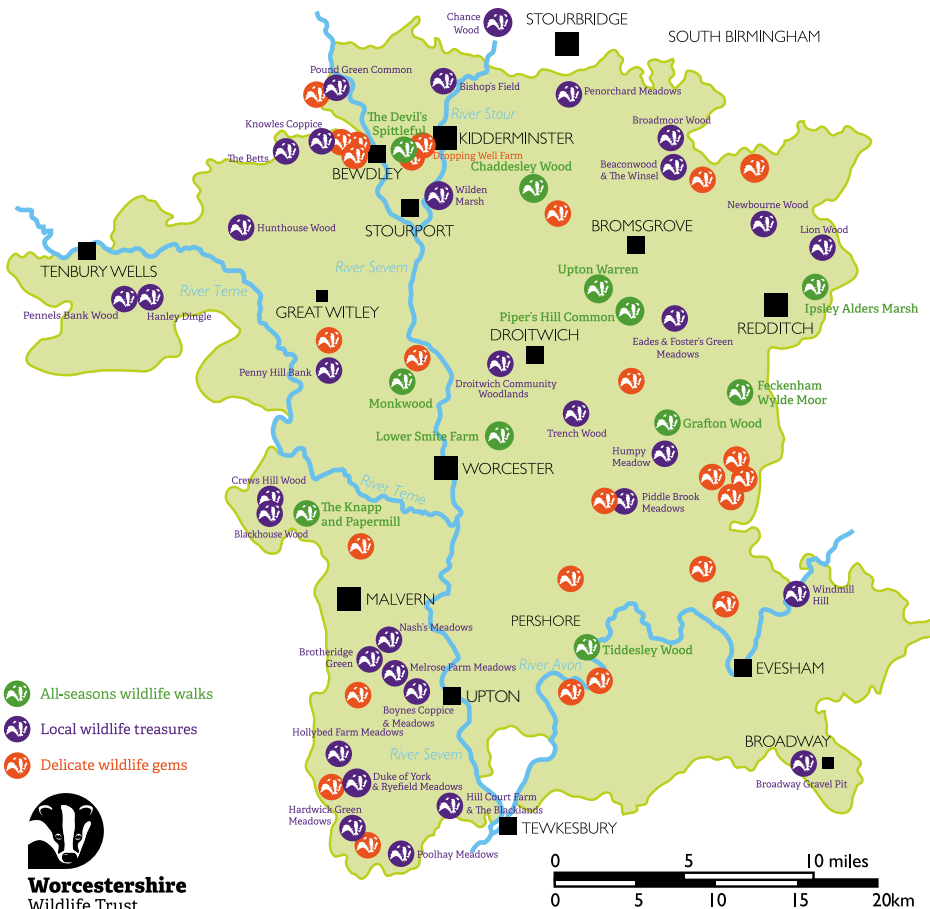


Kelion Huston



Barry Clough

1. Emperor dragonfly hunting over a large pool.
2. Silver-washed fritillary along a woodland path.
3. Hobby hunting over a large lake
4. Viper's bugloss on disturbed ground.
5. Water scorpion in a pond.



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



**Worcestershire**  
Wildlife Trust



If you see wildlife while you're out and about on our nature reserves, why not take a photo and upload your sighting to [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings)



# Worcestershire's magnificent molluscs

Slugs and snails are not generally loved by gardeners but only a tiny number of species nibble our cherished plants. Many are great recyclers, feeding on rotting plants, dung, fungi and even carrion. They provide food for hedgehogs, song thrushes, amphibians and some beetles and are endlessly fascinating, especially if you like the weird and obscure.

Worcestershire's tiniest is only 1.5mm when fully grown whilst our longest slug can stretch out to a whopping 150mm. Molluscs have been around for 540 million years and have been used for food, tools, medicine, clothing, jewellery, decoration, currency and musical instruments. Let's appreciate and celebrate them!



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



Find out more about making friends with molluscs

[www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wild-about-slugs-and-snails](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wild-about-slugs-and-snails)

Main: Wendy Carter, all other photographs by Rosemary Winnall



**Plaited door snail *Cochlodina laminata***  
17mm

To distinguish this from other similar snails takes practice but these are reddish-brown, glossy and smooth. They are found on logs and in leaf litter in deciduous woodland and in wet weather may be found on tree trunks where they feed on algae. Their bodies are beautifully patterned and textured. Snails need calcium to make their shells, so more species are found in lime-rich areas.



**Painter's mussel *Unio pictorum***  
74mm

Named after its use as an artist's palette, it can live for up to 15 years in lowland rivers, canals and reservoirs, half buried in silt, anchored by its muscular foot. Like other similar species these are filter feeders, absorbing oxygen from the water and ingesting diatoms, algae, bacteria and organic matter. The larvae are parasites on fish hosts until they metamorphose into juvenile mussels.



**Green cellar slug *Limacus maculatus***  
up to 130mm

The yellow blotchy appearance and grey-blue tentacles help with identification. It is found around houses as well as woodland, feeding on algae, fungi and detritus. Strictly nocturnal and returning to the same refuge each morning, look for several together during the day under logs and sometimes in bird boxes. When at rest they can keep one eye tentacle half extended as a look out!





**Hedgehog slug *Arion intermedius***  
20mm

Coarse tubercles are evident when it contracts, giving this slug its name. It eats dead leaves and fungi and can survive adverse conditions for several weeks in a mucous-lined cell in soil or moss. Slugs have just one breathing hole on the right side of their body (seen here) from which the faeces are also excreted. In times gone by slugs were used as axle grease for carts.



**Keeled ram's-horn *Planorbis carinatus***  
15mm

This is one of several similar species of which a few have a strong keel around the shell; the position of this and the shape of the mouth help with identification. It is found amongst vegetation in the shallower parts of still or slow-moving lowland water bodies and is often found amongst weed when pond dipping. This air breathing mollusc can live for up to four years.



**Great pond snail *Lymnaea stagnalis***  
50mm

With its sharply pointed spire this is the largest pond snail in Britain and may live for up to five years. They are sold in garden centres so often inhabit garden ponds where they can live alongside ornamental fish. They may be seen moving just under the water surface, breathing and feeding, and their transparent egg strands spotted on plants. They are also found in the still water of lakes, rivers and canals.



**Worm slug *Boettgerilla pallens*** 55mm

First recorded in Britain in 1972 it is now widespread, often spotted under logs in disturbed sites, probably spread in soil through plant sales. It lives underground where it eats earthworm faeces, carrion, decaying plants and fungi. We call it Bert the Gorilla because of its latin name! When at rest it is a cylindrical hump but on the move it transforms to become long and thin.



**Garlic snail *Oxychilus alliarius*** 8mm

This glossy snail with a predatory instinct can be found commonly in all kinds of woodland. There are several similar species but this one, when handled or tickled with a grass stem, can give off a very strong smell of garlic, which aids identification and presumably deters predators. Eyesight is poor but molluscs can smell and taste using their tentacles, lips and foot soles.



**Kentish snail *Monacha cantiana*** 15mm

This was introduced in late Roman times and was originally from Italy and the south of France. It has spread widely and is found commonly on roadsides, hedgerows and open waste ground. It is often pale like this one but can be darker and blotchy; all colours usually have a red flush behind the mouth. They can often be seen perched on open vegetation during the day.





Calendars are available to buy  
- see back page for details





# Wild Winners

**Congratulations to the winners and runners-up of this year's photography competition.**

With over 350 photos from 70 photographers, judging was as hard as ever. Thank you to everyone who entered and caused our judges lots of headscratching.

Four photos faced a public vote to win a place on the front of our 2025 calendar. Congratulations to Laura Maloney whose fabulous *Red Fox* has become this year's overall winner.

**Thank you to our judges:**

Pete Walkden [www.petewalkden.co.uk](http://www.petewalkden.co.uk)

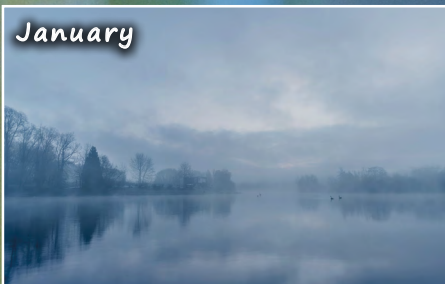
Jason Curtis [www.wyrewildlife.co.uk](http://www.wyrewildlife.co.uk)

**If you're out and about taking photographs, please remember:**

- The welfare of the wildlife always comes first.
- Don't prevent wildlife from going about their normal business.
- Don't stray from paths.

## Our winners are:

January



*Arrow Valley Country Park in the Mist* by Carl Harris

February



*Waxwing* by Alex George

March



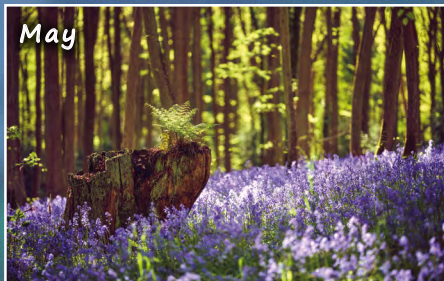
*Robin* by Chris Farman

April



*Hairy-footed Flower Bee* by Jill Orme

May



*Bluebells* by Dariusz Krzan

June



*Parent Bugs* by Richard Clifford

July



*Red Fox* by Laura Maloney

August



*Wood Whites* by Jane Henderson

September



*Fly Agaric* by Dariusz Krzan

October



*Autumn Light* by Gillian Smith

November



*Brittlestem Fungi* by Robin Couchman

December



*Northern Lights* by Chris Farman



# Summer surprises



If you see any of these insects or other wildlife, we'd love to hear from you. Take a photo and upload the details to [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings)

Lesser hornet hoverfly

Wendy Carter



It's the height of summer and your gardens and local greenspaces are buzzing with insect life. Amongst the familiar butterflies and bees are some oddities, creatures that look a bit unusual or are behaving a bit differently. Below are some of the more common species that we are asked about each summer.



Wendy Carter

### Hornet hoverflies

#### *Volucella zonaria/Volucella inanis*

These are two species of hoverfly that do a great job of mimicking our native hornet. Remarkably, the females are also able to camouflage themselves with scent so they can sneak into the nests of hornets and wasps where they lay their eggs. On hatching the larvae scavenge in the nests. In flight, these hoverflies can fool even the most experienced of naturalists into thinking that they're hornets. When at rest, however, the differences are more obvious. Hornets have two pairs of wings whereas hoverflies, like all flies, have one pair. The hoverflies have two large eyes and short antennae. To separate the two species of hornet mimics, you need a good view. The larger of the two (hornet hoverfly *Volucella zonaria*) is more chestnut in colour, especially on the abdomen, and has two bands of chestnut under its abdomen. The smaller (wasp or lesser hornet hoverfly *Volucella inanis*) is more yellow, resembling a wasp rather than a hornet, and lacks the chestnut bands on the underside of the abdomen (left).



Dave Carter

### Elephant hawk-moth

#### *Deilephila elpenor*

Whilst the adults are true beauties of the moth world, the alien-looking larvae of elephant hawk-moths also take some beating. These giant caterpillars are often spotted crossing paths in late summer as they search for somewhere suitable to pupate. Lucky readers may even spot them munching on willowherbs, fuschia, bogbean or bedstraws. They get their name from the trunk-like head that, when threatened, the caterpillar is able to draw into its body, giving the impression of an inflated head with four very large 'eyes' to deter predators. Most elephant hawk-moth caterpillars are brown but some are green. They grow to around 8cm in length and have a backward-curving spine on the final abdominal segment. They'll spend winter and early spring as a pupa in soil before emerging as wondrous pink and olive green adults next year.



Wendy Carter

### Tree bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum*

Fuzzy, furry bumblebees are familiar to most of us but did you know that there are 24 bumblebee species in the UK? One of the most common is a relative newcomer, the tree bumblebee. Like other social bumblebees, the whole colony work together to provide food for the youngsters. Unlike many

bumblebee species that nest in old mouseholes or at the base of tussocky grass, tree bumblebees nest in cavities in trees or, the next best thing, in bird boxes and roof cavities. For much of the colony's lifecycle, most people don't notice a thing but in mid to late summer males and new queens start to emerge and this creates a very visible gathering of bees. These groupings are made of males (that cannot sting) that are waiting for new queens to emerge; their aim is to be the male that mates and passes on his genes to the next generation.



Malcolm Storey

### Giant horntail *Urocerus gigas*

These magnificent insects are about 4cm in length and the yellow-and-black-banded body of the females (males have red abdomens) can look somewhat alarming. They're harmless sawflies and the large protrusion at the end of female abdomens is used to saw into pine trees in order to lay eggs. In fact, almost all insects that appear to have an 'enormous stinger' at the rear end are females that have an external egg-laying appendage, known as an ovipositor. Giant horntails are also known as giant woodwasps and their larvae can spend up to three years developing in pine trees. When laying each egg, the female also deposits a fungus that enables the developing larva to digest the wood. Whilst most giant horntails that are reported to us are in gardens or woodlands with pine and other coniferous trees, they have been known to emerge from harvested timber.



**Wendy Carter**, WWT communications lead who would love to see everyone taking action for insects.



# People power

## Each year the Trust celebrates the achievements of people helping wildlife in Worcestershire.

The Worcestershire Wildlife Medal is presented for dedicated service to nature conservation in the county and the Wild Service Awards recognise outstanding voluntary service to the Trust. This year we have also appointed a Vice President.



## Worcestershire Wildlife Medal

### Rebecca Lashley

Rebecca is a familiar and friendly face to everyone working locally in the conservation sector. Rebecca's been synonymous with the work delivered by the Biodiversity Partnership, led the County's Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund work to bring together local planning specialists to investigate opportunities to maximise the biodiversity benefits accruing from statutory Biodiversity Net Gain, is a key member of the County Council team driving forward Local Nature Recovery Strategy processes and co-led the production of the seminal Worcestershire State of Nature Report in 2023. Her work with the Green Infrastructure (GI) Partnership has been central to its ongoing success and she guided production of the new GI Strategy for Worcestershire, published in Jan 2024.

Working for the Trust and Worcestershire Biological Records Centre, Rebecca managed a diverse range of biodiversity projects including



orchards, ancient trees and projects in the Malvern Hills AONB, Forest of Feckenham and the Vale of Evesham. She has delivered training courses to upskill the public, professional ecologists and land managers on all manner of topics from black poplars to noble chafers.

### Cody Levine

Cody has been instrumental in inspiring and promoting nature conservation across the county. Cody is a key player in the Local Nature Partnership and Green Infrastructure Partnership, leads on Worcestershire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Worcestershire Habitat Inventory, a combined environmental dataset detailing the county's habitats on a field-by-field basis, providing information to underpin decision-making at all levels in Worcestershire. His name is synonymous with a love of wildlife, which

underpins his outstanding advocacy for the natural world. His ecological and technical know-how are coupled with infectious enthusiasm and an easy-going approach meaning that his influence among planners and the development sector pushes far beyond statutory minimums; his efforts with others in the County Council mean that the county now leads the way in pioneering bat-friendly road lighting.

He is responsible for promoting ecological matters and driving up

ecological standards in important areas across all the local authorities in the county. His policy input and training sessions offer profound insights designed to help better, smarter and more effective integration of wildlife into development.



## Wild Service Award

### Bart Brierley

A stalwart roving volunteer, turning up every week to muck in on tasks across our reserves.

### Chris Dobbs

Researching, acquiring and using drone, video and timelapse camera footage to monitor our changing habitats.

### Joan Kearton-Jones

Fundraiser, reception volunteer, Wyre Forest Local Group committee and Chaddesley Wood work parties.

### Richard Jeynes

Fundraiser, tool repairs, Chaddesley Wood work parties and Wyre Forest Local Group.

### Diana Westmoreland

Point of contact, record collator and the 'hub' of the collaborative Wildlife Sightings campaign.

### David Hopkinson

Hollybed Farm Meadows work party.

## Vice Presidency

Awarded to David Mortiboys in recognition of long service as a Trustee, six years as Chair.





# Taking action for insects



Leanne Manchester

Common carder bumblebee

**When was the last time you noticed a visible presence of insects in your surrounding environment? When your garden or local park was humming and crawling with life?**

It seems that the plentiful spring sights of bees and butterflies and the summer sounds of crickets and grasshoppers have dwindled over the years and at a concerning rate. With the increased use of pesticides and the preference for tidy lawns and hedgerows, habitats for these small creatures are declining not only in number but also in quality. This has had a devastating impact on insects, with 41% now facing extinction.

Without these tiny creatures, entire ecosystems would break down. Birds, bats, amphibians, reptiles, small mammals and fish, which all rely on insects as a food source, would soon start to die out. Plant life, dependent on the efforts of pollinators and detritivores, would also deteriorate.

It's not just the natural world that would feel the loss of insects; with three out of four crops we grow requiring pollination, our food security is also at risk.

Now more than ever, insects need our support. We're encouraging everyone to take action for insects where they can. If gardeners, landowners and local authorities all left their lawns, verges and hedgerows a little bit wilder and pesticide-free, insects would have the stepping stones to move through landscapes and have places to feed along the way. By committing to the creation and maintenance of good-quality habitats, whether this be in parks or plant pots, we can help our bugs bounce back.


Whilst showing you how you can support insects on your patch, on social media we'll also be shedding a light on the incredible lives they lead. Stories about how dainty butterflies battle the elements across continents, how dragonflies and damsels view the world in ultra-high definition and how beetles support new life and growth through recycling nutrients from dead matter. Despite their small stature, insects have amazing capabilities and are hugely valuable, even the creatures 'stung' by a bad reputation!


There's two very simple things we're asking everyone to consider:



- Start creating habitats for insects.
- Stop using pesticides.

With your help Worcestershire's greenspaces will start to flutter, buzz and crawl with life once again.

 For ideas about how to help insects: [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/action-insects](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/action-insects).

 Take a photo and share what you spot: [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings)

 Follow us on social media for regular updates:

 [www.facebook.com/worcestershirewildlifetrust](https://www.facebook.com/worcestershirewildlifetrust)  
 [x.com/WorcsWT](https://x.com/WorcsWT)  
 [www.instagram.com/worcswt/](https://www.instagram.com/worcswt/)



**Shauna McLaren,**  
Trust Digital and  
Communications Officer  
loves sharing wildlife  
stories with others.



# Wild notebook

## Mustn't forget

### Five things to photograph:

- Earthworm eggs in the soil.
- A tiny caterpillar inside a leaf mine.
- Toadstools growing on dead wood.
- Ivy bees nectaring on ivy flowers.
- A robin's pincushion gall on wild rose.

### Five things to spot:

- Follow a hedge and identify the plants.
- Spot a tiny springtail and watch it spring.
- Visit an old meadow and look for grassland fungi.
- Listen for migrating birds at night flying through on migration calling to each other.
- Identify different flowering speedwells.

All photographs by Rosemary Winnall



## STAR SPECIES



### Furry peat hoverfly (male) *Sericomyia superbiens*

Not all furry brown flying insects are bees and several fly species are good look-alikes! This hoverfly is not often recorded but is worth looking for in late summer nectaring on devil's-bit scabious and knapweed. The larvae are thought to develop in peaty pools. I was lucky enough to be shown this newly-emerged adult in September in a garden near Abberley that has a couple of silty ponds. It's a male with eyes meeting in the middle. What a beauty!



**Migrant dragonfly *Aeshna mixta* (male)**

This colourful dragonfly, our smallest British hawker, may be seen flying between July and September. Look out for the yellow mark, shaped like a golf tee or capital 'T' at the top of the abdomen; males have blue eyes, females brown. These were originally migrants to the UK but have been spreading northwards and now breed.

**Bracken club *Typhula quisquiliaris***

Wading through dead bracken in the autumn it is easy to miss these tiny fungi clubs with their hairy stipes (stems) and growing up to 9mm tall. They feed saprotrophically inside the stems, often with other fungi species, aiding the breakdown of this dead plant material.

**Water cricket *Velia caprai* wingless female**

Usually seen skidding around on the surface in slow-running water these overwinter as adults so can be seen in both autumn and spring. They contain a chemical that makes them distasteful to fish. They scan spit saliva on the water surface, which reduces water tension and allows them to travel much faster.

**Parrot Waxcap *Gliophorus psittacinus***

Vigilance is needed to spot these stunning slimy waxcaps that spring up overnight in grassy places. Although green at first, making them easy to identify, this colour fades with sunlight and they soon change to yellow or pinkish although the gills under the cap remain green for a while longer.

**Conkers**

What amazing protection horse chestnuts trees have to protect their seeds! A mature tree can produce hundreds of fruits, each one containing one, or sometimes two, conkers. These are poisonous, containing esculin, and are said to deter spiders when placed along house skirting boards! Has anyone proved this?

**Figwort sawfly larva *Tenthredo scrophulariae***

Found in late summer, these conspicuous larvae feed on figwort leaves before moving off the plant to overwinter. They pupate in the spring before emerging as colourful adults that look like yellow-stripy social wasps but have bright orange antennae and no narrow waist.

**Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus***

In late summer young hedgehogs begin exploring away from their nest; this one was in the garden. They still need their mother's milk for the first two months of their lives, after which they accompany the mother on her night-time excursions and gradually learn what is good to eat.



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







# JELLYFISH AFLOAT!

**Sarah Ward, Marine Conservation Officer for Sussex Wildlife Trust, introduces you to the watery world of blue, mauve or translucent jellyfish around UK shores. Beware, this story has a sting in its tail!**

Jellyfish have existed on our planet in various guises for millions of years – they were drifting around before even the dinosaurs existed. In spite of their name, they are not fish at all, but are categorised in the group ‘cnidaria’, which comes from the Greek word for ‘nettle’, and comprises various marine animals with stinging cells, including anemones and corals.

Jellyfish come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes and an assortment of beautiful colours (although my personal favourite is the almost colourless moon jellyfish). The smallest known jellies are around two centimetres wide and the biggest can be up to two metres. A huge barrel jellyfish was spotted in Cornish waters in 2019, which was estimated to have been one and a half metres wide.

Last summer on the Sussex coast, we had a huge influx of jellyfish. I was lucky enough to witness the phenomenon during one of our Shoresearch surveys, where we recorded hundreds of them


– there were at least three different species! It was amazing to see so many of them gently floating in tidal pools in the warm sunshine, having drifted to the coastline on the tide and left temporarily stranded as it retreated.

The influx had been witnessed by many local coast-goers. An increase in jellyfish numbers is not unusual during the summer, particularly if there’s been a spell of warm, settled weather. UK jellyfish principally eat plankton – they will follow their source of food but as drifters they are not able to swim directionally. They drift in on currents and can sometimes be found in large numbers when they’ve all drifted together. Jellyfish reproduction also generally occurs in the height of summer, when males release their sperm into the sea, with hopes that a nearby female will suck it up into their stomach, where fertilisation occurs.

There are six species of jellyfish that can be seen on UK coasts: the mauve stinger, blue, barrel, lion’s mane, moon and compass jellyfish. There are also two jelly-like relatives, the Portuguese man-o-war and the by-the-wind sailor. All these are able to sting so it is best to be cautious. If you do get stung, the

best thing to do is remove any stingers still attached (a credit card is good to use to scrape them off – avoid using your fingers as you’ll end up with stung fingers as well) and rinse with water. For most people the pain is relatively mild and should subside within a few hours; over-the-counter painkillers or antihistamines can help. Medical advice should be sought if you have a severe reaction.

Remember that jellyfish can still sting when they’re dead, so it’s best not to touch if you see one washed up on the beach.

 Have you seen a jellyfish in the UK sea? We have a great identification guide on our website. You can also report your sightings to your local Wildlife Trust.



Sarah Ward works for Sussex Wildlife Trust as Marine Conservation Officer, delivering marine conservation, advocacy and engagement for the Sussex coast and sea.



# Linking our landscape

**There are more than 500 sites covering over 9000ha in Worcestershire that are little known yet are playing a fundamental role in nature's recovery. They are known as Local Wildlife Sites.**

Local Wildlife Sites are the county's finest hedgerows, orchards, woodlands, heathlands, grasslands, rivers and wetlands. Some have been listed for a rare species that they support, such as the endangered white-clawed crayfish. Overall, they each have their own substantial and demonstrable value for nature conservation in Worcestershire.

They form countless habitat stepping stones that join-up our nature reserves and other designated sites. This connectivity allows wildlife to move and be more resilient to life's challenges.

Many Local Wildlife Sites lie off the beaten track and occur as hidden gems in the countryside, where more sensitive species can live undisturbed by visitors.

The special habitat that a Local Wildlife Site supports is a direct result of a land manager's sympathetic management over many years, and good habitat condition into the future is dependent on their ongoing goodwill, understanding and availability of resources.

Most Local Wildlife Sites are owned and managed by private individuals. The Worcestershire Local Wildlife Sites Partnership offers support and advice to land managers to help them take care of Local Wildlife Sites.

It is impossible to count just how many orchids, butterflies, dormice, slow-worms, noble chafer beetles and many more rely on these sites year after year. Bravo to those amazing land managers who are doing great things for wildlife on their land!

Find out more



[www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/  
local-wildlife-sites](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/local-wildlife-sites)



Small skipper

Words: **Jasmine Walters**

Photo: **Cathryn Dhonau**



# Seasonal pickings

## Top tip

Woodland rides will be buzzing with insects, pausing frequently as you walk along a path is a great way to appreciate this wealth of life.

**Sunday 14th April was a momentous day in my Trust career. With informative leaflets in my back pocket and pin badges, as a thank for supporting us, in my bag, I made my way to The Devil's Spittleful nature reserve to launch Project Yellowhammer. In simple terms, this is a long-term project to increase the remnants of the reserve's once flourishing and widespread yellowhammer population, a species in severe decline across the UK.**

Our aim is to get visitors to recognise the importance of reducing disturbance across the reserve to a minimum. If we can influence their behaviour to that of always keeping dogs on the lead and to walking only the permitted paths, there is every opportunity for yellowhammers to re-establish themselves across the heathland. Of course, by helping yellowhammers, visitors will also be helping all the other wildlife on the reserve too. So, ultimately, success rests squarely in the hands of the reserve's many visitors and I have to say that this first day filled me with positivity and optimism.

I've had other reasons to feel positive. Despite how wet spring was, insects seemed to have had a better start than they did last year. The reserves were buzzing from mid-April. Small tortoiseshell butterflies were more visible and migrant bird species came thick and fast, seemingly arriving earlier than usual in some cases.

Looking forward to autumn and,

despite the fact that I've personally begun calling it Big Dragonfly time, I'm setting my sights on a distinctly smaller target. A relatively recent colonist from Europe, over the last 15 years the willow emerald damselfly has expanded its range north and westward and is now spreading along our own waterways and onto our ponds. It takes some separating from the commoner emerald damselfly, as it ideally needs a good photo, but it's a rewarding and exciting challenge.

Tracking its progress is a worthwhile endeavour and I shall be scanning our reserves' ponds and overhanging willow branches to try and chart its spread. On the wing from August to October, there's plenty of time to search for them. Damselflies usually hold their wings closed over their body but willow emeralds hold them out at an angle. This makes individuals look like a jet aircraft and I much prefer the European name - western willow spreadwing!



Chris Farman

Yellowhammer



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



# Secrets of **success** with

**Selecting plants is one of the most exciting parts of gardening but compost choice can determine a great deal of success in the garden.**

When selecting a compost, the most important thing is to look for a peat-free label. Taking peat out of the ground destroys important habitats and releases large amounts of stored carbon into the atmosphere, so gardening peat-free is an easy way to take positive action for wildlife and climate. If you can't find peat-free stated on the bag, then the chances are the product contains peat. Something marked as organic or environmentally-friendly doesn't necessarily mean it's peat-free.

Peat-free mixes contain more microbes, many of which are beneficial for your plants but can change how the compost performs the longer they are

left in the bag. To get the best from your compost, we recommend using it in the growing season you bought it or within a year of the manufacture date. If you are using smaller amounts of specialist mixes, such as ericaceous compost for acid-loving plants, you could share with a friend or local gardening group to save on cost.

Not every peat-free mix will be a perfect fit for every gardener, so try a couple of different types to find one that suits your plants and growing environment. Peat-free compost has come a long way, with a wide range for every need and plant type available. All peat-free mixes are different, so you might also need to adjust watering and feeding a little. As a general rule, peat-free may need to be watered little and often compared to peat.

Getting to know what you need from your compost and which products give healthy, long-lasting plants can unlock a whole new world of gardening success for anyone, even if you don't have the greenest fingers!

- **Meadows.** A wildflower patch full of native annuals like ox-eye daisy won't need any compost at all, as these plants prefer low nutrient soils, so you can sow directly into bare ground.
- **Veg.** Soil improvers and manures, which contain lots of organic matter, can add nutrients without the need for lots of fertiliser.





# peat-free compost

- **Seeds.** Seed and cutting compost is specially mixed to suit these young plants, being much finer and containing less slow-release feed than multipurpose compost. The fine texture is especially important for small seeds like foxglove.
- **Trees and hedges.** As well as being brilliant for wildlife, trees and hedge plants often come bare root (not in a pot), so you can plant in the ground, just adding some mulch. Home compost or leaf mould are easy mulches to make yourself.
- **Baskets, containers and boxes.** Peat-free compost is prone to a dry top so check with your finger to see if there is moisture lower down in the container and aim to keep compost just moist, stopping watering before it runs out the bottom.
- **Specialist plants.** Look for products labelled as working for plant groups that need specific soil conditions (e.g. carnivorous sundews or ericaceous cranberries), as multipurpose compost won't provide the conditions they need to grow well.
- **Pond plants.** Use special aquatic mixes to fill pond basket planters, these are formulated to ensure nutrient release is slower, stopping leaching into the pond which can cause algal growth.
- **Houseplants.** One of the biggest killers of houseplants is overwatering. Mixing houseplant-specific compost with grit or fine bark will help stop root rot by improving drainage.



As well as in compost, peat can be found in bedding plants and potted house plants. Help us raise awareness of 'hidden peat' by becoming a peat inspector: [www.wildlifetrusts.org/ban-sale-peat](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/ban-sale-peat)



**Claire Thorpe** is the peat-free campaign manager for the RHS and is passionate about helping people garden sustainably.



Sophie Artemis





# Nature is there for you



Vitamin N (for Nature) is good for you physically, mentally and physiologically, and walking is one of the most accessible activities and the easiest way to immerse yourself in it. You don't need much expertise or equipment or even an epic landscape; you just put one foot in front of the other. All my life, but even more so through my cancer diagnosis and other challenging episodes, nature has been there for me. It's brought me strength and mental clarity. And, as well as the obvious health benefits it brings, the outdoors is a treasure trove of inspiration and really gives me the space to think things through.

Yet, we know that one in two children spend less than a single hour outside every day. One of the barriers I've seen through my work with The Outdoor Guide and our Waterproofs and Wellies project is that, in many cases, children simply don't have the appropriate clothing to spend time outdoors at school. Kids grow out of clothes so quickly and with the difficult economic times we live in, it's no surprise that many families struggle to keep up with constantly buying new items. We're trying to remove this barrier by supplying schools with waterproofs and wellies to aid outdoor learning, enabling children to gain access to nature. Properly equipped, I hope that by spending more time outdoors, children will develop a meaningful connection with the natural world as well as those enriching experiences that I've found have been hugely beneficial in later life.

Nature may be the answer to the climate crisis but it can also help us to deal with things in our personal lives. The benefits of being out in nature are tangible. When we're out walking, we have the power to change our pace and our mood. We can find union with

nature, camaraderie with friends and a form of inner peace with ourselves. Walking balances the soul and acts as a confidante and therapist and has been proven to soothe anxiety and stress. A mountain or a tree, a bird or a beetle, can keep you company in times of grief, celebration and solitude.

Building nature into your everyday life creates many positive feedback loops, encouraging exercise, which in turn improves your diet, and enables you to sleep better and have better, more meaningful interactions with the world and the people around you. If you can't escape for an hour, try five or 10 minutes in your lunch break. I call them nature snacks – just a few minutes every day is enough to revive and restore (although the longer the better in my opinion).

I worry that there is a real feeling of disconnection from nature in the current generation of children and young adults. So it's important to try to do our bit to remove barriers. There are many communities doing amazing work supported by Wildlife Trust community projects. Schools, individuals and community groups are taking action for nature all across the UK, creating more and more small green spaces, which are especially important in urban areas. That little bit of treasured green space to grow food on and play in gently encourages children to see nature and nurture the spirit of working together.



Find out more about how Worcestershire Wildlife Trust is helping to support community groups across the county:

**[www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/  
community-action](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/community-action)**



Sophie Artemis

**Julia Bradbury**



**Julia Bradbury,**

*Sunday Times* best-selling author of *Walk Yourself Happy*, shares her passion for walking towards happiness with nature by her side.

The Outdoor Guide Foundation has a simple aim; to make the outdoors more accessible for all – particularly children.

Find out more

**[www.theoutdoorguide.co.uk](http://www.theoutdoorguide.co.uk)**

@JuliaBradbury





# Your letters

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



## Owl box

To encourage owls in the riverside fields above Eckington, I made a nesting box using plans from the Barn Owl Trust with wood and panels from an old disused shed. It has a landing platform, climbing grips for baby owls and a big opening. With the help of Carl and Andy, we secured it high up on an oak tree facing open fields where wildlife abounds. It is on private land well away from houses. Here's hoping it will prove a howling success! Christopher Robin fans will be pleased to hear that lettering over the entry hole says WOL.

**Colin Reeves**

## Dawn chorus

Nature wrote the melody  
The dawn chorus brings  
Utilising all the notes  
That every songbird sings  
The blackbird and the robin  
Sing long into the night  
Then they lead the way  
Before the break of day  
While the bluebird sings  
When it can see the morning light

**Elaine Robinson**

### KEEP IN TOUCH

✉ Sign up to our e-newsletter: [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/e-newsletter](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/e-newsletter)

📘 [www.facebook.com/worcestershirowildlifetrust](https://www.facebook.com/worcestershirowildlifetrust)

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📺 [www.flickr.com/groups/](https://www.flickr.com/groups/)

📺 [www.youtube.com/c/WorcsWildlifeTrustUK1](https://www.youtube.com/c/WorcsWildlifeTrustUK1)

## Safe haven

Found this leveret hiding by our front door. We see hares regularly in the field and the same thing happened last year.

**Lucy Green**

*Ed. If you find an injured or abandoned leveret, you can contact Worcestershire Leveret Rescue for help and advice on 07535 164580.*



Lucy Green

## What's in a name?

*Ed. Thanks to John Kirk and Roger Stickland for asking whether we'd consider using scientific names for species throughout the magazine. We currently do this when we're focusing on species, for example in our 'Wild notebook' feature. We feel that this provides a suitable balance for readers who are new to wildlife names and readers keen to know more. If you'd like to learn more, our Wildlife A-Z webpages feature common and scientific names [www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-explorer](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-explorer)*



Anife Turchin

## New(t) residents

Last summer, I got approached by my daughter's school, St Joseph's Primary in Malvern, to help out with the school pond revamp. I read quite a few of your sources of invaluable advice and guidance and also follow you on social media. The new child and wildlife pond was completed last year and is now maturing – we already have newts!

**Anife Turchin**

## Social feeds

Holly blues are beautiful and there's loads about at the moment

📘 **Christina Matthews**



Christina Matthews

Just got back from a run and could hear snuffling in the hedgehog house . . . someone's been enjoying the cat biscuits!

✉ @Philw1973



Christina Matthews



# Christmas Gifts

## Help wildlife while you shop

**GREETINGS CARDS £4 PER PACK (10 CARDS) OR 3 PACKS FOR £10**

Our cards are encased in cardboard wallets, every element is recyclable, no foil, no glitter and no plastic bags. 125mm x 125mm. Message reads 'Season's Greetings and Best Wishes for the New Year.'

Christmas cards are available from Lower Smite, Revills Farm Shop near Pershore, Tudor House Museum, Droitwich Heritage Centre, Upton Snodsbury Village Store, The Hop Pocket in Bishop's Frome, Alfrick Community Shop, The Guildhall Worcester, Martley Stores, Clive's Fruit Farm, Abberley General Stores, The Shop at Crowle, Broadway Tourist Information Centre, Lower Broadheath Community Shop, Upton-upon-Severn Post Office, Colwall Post Office, Ellenden Farm Shop, Bretforton Community Shop and The Pantry at Peopleton. A big thank you to all these retailers for their continued support!



Blackbird and Berries



Christmas Hare



Festive Robin



Frosty Fox



Redwing in Winter



Long-tailed Tit



Moonlight Hare



Winter Landscape

### VIRTUAL GIFTS FROM £10

Make a real difference for wildlife. Our virtual gifts, adopt-a-species and rent-a-nest are perfect for family friends, colleagues or Secret Santa recipients! Whether you adopt an otter, lease a nest box at one of our woodland nature reserves or support Worcestershire's Wonderful Wetlands with a virtual gift card, your purchase will go directly towards protecting precious habitats and the wildlife that call them home.



### STOCKING FILLERS

Our sustainably-sourced and plastic-free gifts are the perfect stocking fillers. From tins of seedballs for the gardeners, beautiful notebooks to jot down wildlife sightings and fragrant soaps, we've got something for everyone!



Notebook £8.50

### To order, visit:

[www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/shop](http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/shop)

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