



Worcestershire Wildlife Trust



'Civilisation' from Penorchard Meadows

Stourbridge & Hagley Local Group Newsletter Summer 2025

Stourbridge & Hagley Local Group events August - December 2025

Walks

Walk on Hartlebury Common

Sunday August 3rd at 10am

We will join Richard Cory on a walk to explore the natural and social history of his local patch, Hartlebury Common SSSI. Meet at Wilden Top Car Park just off the B4193 Stourport to Hartlebury Road.
Grid ref. SO826713.

Go Batty at Saltwells National Nature Reserve

Friday 12th September at 7pm

Our walk will be led by Les Drinkwater, the Chairman of the Friends of Saltwells National Nature Reserve. An evening walk to discover the bats that call this nature reserve home, Les will give a short talk about bats before we walk across the reserve to Lodge Farm Reservoir. Booking is required as numbers are limited; phone 01384 371064 to book your place. Leave your name and number on the answerphone and I will get back to you. There will be a charge of £3 per person. Meet on the main car park on Saltwells Lane off Saltwells Road/Coppice Lane near Saltwells Inn. Postcode DY5 1AX Grid ref. SO933868.

Talks

At St. Saviours Church Hall, Hagley

26th September at 7.30pm

From painted lady to old lady: those incredible butterflies and moths

a talk by David Smith

24th October at 7.30pm

Upton Warren Reserve updated

a talk by Gordon Forrest

28th November at 7.30pm

The wonders of Oz; the wildlife of Australia

a talk by Gerry Griffiths

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

Volunteer conference 2025

Despite weather forecasts promising violent thunderstorms and torrential downpours, Andy and I fearlessly set out for Lower Smite Farm to join volunteers from around the county at the annual volunteers' conference. Fortunately, other stalwart volunteers had also decided to brave the elements and

there was a 'full house'. Notably, the weather stayed fine nearly all day until a light shower mid-afternoon!

On arrival, we were met with a very warm greeting from Trust staff and a welcoming hot drink to start the morning's proceedings. Mike Perry, in his new role of CEO, thanked volunteers for all of the support given to the Trust before highlighting key project successes in recent times and outlining aims for the future. Descriptions of progress at Green Farm provided an excellent example of what can happen to improve biodiversity in a relatively short space of time. Dom Cragg then gave an update about the new acquisition next to Hanley Dingle, which will provide an opportunity to create a varied habitat alongside the original reserve. It will be named 'The Colin Raven Nature Reserve' in honour of the recently retired CEO.

Steve Bloomfield, the new Head of Conservation after Helen Woodman's retirement, and Andy Bucklitch introduced themselves before providing further information about reserve management and traineeships. Marissa Ryland concluded the first section with a look at the exciting Wilder Schools initiative, which aims to engage more young people with nature and the outdoors.

After a short break, we were treated to a talk about beavers in the Wyre Forest and beyond by Tom Simpson of Natural England. Andy and I had already been on a guided walk to the beaver enclosure in the Wyre Forest with staff from the Forestry Commission. It was clear from all parties that the project has been met with huge enthusiasm and passion. Already the beavers have created dams, pools and clearings – creating a much more diverse habitat whilst holding back water from reaching Dowles Brook, great for flood prevention in times of heavy rainfall and water retention in times of drought. The beavers have settled in well and there is hope that there may be a patter of tiny paws very soon.

Following a delicious lunch, we clambered (in my case) into the back of Land Rovers, and a variety of other vehicles, for a visit to land next to Trench Wood that the Trust is fundraising to buy. The original area was once owned and clear-felled by the Harris Brush Company but it is now an area rich in trees, scrub and woodland plants – a place that is increasingly good for rare butterflies. Reserves officer Tom led a guided walk around the new area, explaining proposals for areas of flower-rich grassland, planted woodland, self-seeded areas and ponds – again a wide variety of habitats, leading to biodiversity. It was only in the last half hour of this walk that we experienced light showers, so in conclusion – a great day was had by all.

Sue Duffield

What is in a Name?

A hamlet called Wendy

(with apologies to Nevil Shute's 'A Town like Alice')

I have always found local place names interesting as they give us a real insight into our ancestors and the landscape. Many of the place names around Stourbridge and the wider Black Country were formed in Anglo-Saxon times from elements of Old English and much can be learned of them from the internet – an excellent way to pass a rainy day.

A little research reminds us that ours was a landscape of rolling hills and a heavily wooded landscape, much of it Royal Forest, with a number of clearings, some inhabited, others used for stock or crops, and we were bounded on one side by the River Stour. The names of Stourbridge, Oldswinford and Kingswinford all indicate the importance of being able to cross the river and that there were shallower places allowing stock, particularly pigs, to be moved.

Many of our local villages are suffixed with 'ly' or 'ley', the Old English 'leah', meaning a man-made clearing in a wood. Many of these relate to plants that flourished there. I love to think of Brierley Hill covered in wild roses, and Bromley Hills with the yellow flowers of broom, Claverley with 'claeFRE' – clover – and 'Hagga leah' Hagley with a haw wood.

That there were still wolves roaming the forests is indicated in the name of Wordsley – Wolfweard's leah [wolf guard]. These were hunted alongside deer and boar and were still numerous into the 13th century.

Other names are associated with specific people: Dudda of Dudley and, I wonder, who was the warrior 'Secg' who gave his name to Sedgley?

The word 'cot' – basic dwelling – is found in Amela's cot – Amblecote – and in Wulfhere's cot – Wollescote, (another wolf guard). The word 'tun' might suggest a cluster of dwellings as in Stourton and Wulgan's tun – Wollaston.

So much has changed but even in 1968 when I first moved to the area it was still a series of these identifiable villages, all surrounded by green areas, which were rapidly turned into large housing estates to home the increasing volume of young Midlandsers. Yet there are still remnants of that Anglo-Saxon landscape if we know where to look.

What caused me to revisit this topic was a



photograph shared by my daughter with friends and family that caused much hilarity at the time.

At first I thought it a clever joke but discovered that there really is a small hamlet in south Cambridgeshire called Wendy, situated on a sharp bend where North Ditch meets the River Cam. The

name is found in the Domesday Book and is thought to come from 'wandre', river-bend island. I had thought my name was coined by J M Barrie in 'Peter Pan' but perhaps my origins are much earlier!

Wendy Wilkins

Spot the difference

Over the years I've observed nature in my garden and local countryside. Since 2022 I've recorded interesting notes throughout the year. Once a week for one hour I record the birds in my garden for the BTO Garden Birdwatch. This has led me to notice differences in the birds, mammals, amphibians, insects and plants. The weather has an effect; too hot, too cold, too wet causes changes in nature.

January 1st 2022 was the warmest recorded in London at 16°C. But five days later on January 5th there was snow and a daytime temperature of 5°C., the following days having several heavy frosts.

December 31st 2024 I found aconites and snowdrops flowering earlier than ever! A green woodpecker was seen in my garden in the first week in January this year, was it searching for ants? A good range of birds have been regular visitors to my feeders this year: song thrush, wren, long-tailed tit, great tit, blue tit, coal tit, goldfinch, greenfinch, chaffinch together with robins, dunnocks and blackbirds. Blackcaps and a nuthatch have also been regular winter visitors. Pigeons and magpies are always present and their numbers remain constant. March this year was cold and the flowers in my garden and the surrounding countryside were late flowering, notably daffodils and blackthorn. The first celandine I saw at Penorchard Meadows was on 3rd March. Surprisingly, a peacock butterfly was observed in my garden on 8th March this year. This is the earliest butterfly I've seen over the last four years!

The main changes have been more goldfinches, lack of bullfinches and goldcrests, and only one hedgehog seen in 2023. In autumn, there have been lots of redwings but fewer fieldfares. Small tortoiseshell butterfly numbers have been down. The number of bees has been variable. Climate is an important factor as it affects the survival rate of all plants and animals.

Pam Holmes

Volunteer days at Penorchard Meadows

Volunteer days are held on the 1st Monday of the month 10am – 3pm on:

August 4th September 1st October 6th
November 3rd December 1st

Volunteer days at Romsley Manor Meadows

Volunteer days are held on the 3rd Monday of the month from 10am – 3pm on:

August 18th September 15th October 20th
November 17th December 15th

Current volunteers will receive an email giving details of our meeting place for each work party.

New volunteers should contact Andy Harris on andyh@worcestershireswildlifetrust.org

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