



Worcestershire
Wildlife Trust

Wyre Forest Local Group

Winter 2025 newsletter

The use of grazing animals in conservation

Grazing animals are widely used in conservation in order to maintain and increase the biodiversity of natural grasslands, heathlands, and many other habitats. This form of maintenance is less intensive than other methods, such as prescribed burning or mowing, but still needs to be managed.

Grazing animals are used for three main reasons; they add nutrients back into the soil through their manure; their hooves help break up compacted soil, which encourages new plants to seed; by eating certain plants they help to reduce competition for other, less vigorous, species. This creates a varied structure within the area and in turn creates micro-habitats.

Historically, large herbivores, such as boars and bison, would eat small saplings and aggressive plant species. This created micro-habitats that supported a wide range of animals. A micro-habitat allows certain species to thrive where they may not survive in a broader environment. As humans developed the landscape, grasslands were converted for farming and large herbivores died out or were domesticated. Over time, these became the farm animals seen today. However, this meant that many micro-habitats were destroyed or otherwise disappeared.

In the present day, conservation organisations, such as Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, use grazing animals to create and maintain grasslands and heathland. Many of these animals are rare breeds. Based on the UK National Breed Inventory for 2020, almost 80% of the UK's native livestock breeds are currently at risk of extinction. As well as increasing the numbers of rare or traditional breeds, conservation grazing can also mean that certain livestock can be chosen that are best suited to create certain habitats.

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust use Soay sheep and cattle. Kent Wildlife Trust use bison. Hampshire & Isle of Wight Trust use a variety of animals including British white cattle, Hebridean sheep and Exmoor ponies. The South & West Wales Wildlife Trust use Welsh ponies.

Also in our local area, Worcestershire County Council use longhorn Cattle on Hartlebury Common and Wyre Forest District Council use Shetland cattle on Burlish Top to maintain those areas.

Conservation grazing is a vital tool for maintaining habitats, promoting biodiversity and controlling invasive species. It is also a sustainable, more effective practice than other forms of maintenance.

Some of the cattle and sheep on Trust reserves are part of Wyre Forest District Council's Grazing Animals Project. You can find out more about this on the Council's website:

www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/things-to-see-do-and-visit/countryside-and-nature/grazing-animals-project/

Talks

You're welcome to join us at Holy Innocents Community Hall, Kidderminster at 7.30p.m. Admission £3.00

Thursday 8th Jan The Nature of Finland & Norway by Gerald Griffiths

Gerald will examine the diverse landscapes of Finland and Norway, ranging from the tundra in the far north to the coniferous forests and fjords in the south.

Thursday 5th Feb Bats: figs, fish, flowers & flies, the incredibly varied diet of bats by Matthew Terry

Matthew will talk about British bats as well as the work of the Worcestershire Bat Group and the Bat Conservation Trust.

Thursday 5th Mar Wildlife Around Mallaig by Roma Bubb & Chris Morris

Roma and Chris will give us a report of their week spent walking and looking for wildlife in the West Highlands with particular emphasis on the impact of climate change.

Thursday 2nd Apr Great British Birds by Ashley Grove

Stories about birds, the winners and losers of climate change, record breakers and just those special birds we all love. His talk will be packed with great images of many of our personal favourites.

Walks

All start at 10.a.m. Donations to WWT. Well behaved dogs on a lead welcome.

Sunday 11th Jan Ribbesford revealed Led by: Chris Morris and Roma Bubb

Meet: Blackstone Riverside Park car park at GR S0789742 (PC: DY12 2TQ).

A walk around Ribbesford looking at the natural history, local history and folklore. One incline. One road crossing. This is a walk of approx.. three miles. No stiles.

Sunday 8th Feb Hartlebury Common in winter Led by: Richard Cory

Meet: Wilden Top car park, Stourport. GR SO 826714 (PC: DY13 9JD).

A walk around Hartlebury Common with an eye to geology & social history. Flat terrain except for steep slope between upper & lower terraces. This is a walk of approximately 2.5 miles with no stiles.

Sunday 8th Mar Puxton pootle Led by: Jean Maffei

Meet: Springfield car park, Kidderminster. GR OS 835777 (PC DY10 2PS).

A walk past Stackpool to explore Puxton Marsh. Could be muddy. This is a walk of approximately 2.5 miles, no stiles.

Sunday 12th Apr Fields, lanes and views around Cleobury Mortimer. Led by: Viv Farrell.

Meet: Childe Road West car park, Cleobury Mortimer. GR OS 673756 (PC: DY14 8PB). Parking also available on opposite side of the road a few meters away. Toilets nearby.

Undulating countryside with a steepish descent after the Jubilee bench. Mainly fields & lanes with a few steps. May be some livestock so dogs on leads please. This is a walk of approx. three miles. Three stiles.

For more information about our walks, please contact either:

Roma Bubb: bubb.roma@outlook.com or Chris Morris: chrismorris222@btinternet.com

For more information go to: www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk

For further information about Wyre Forest Local Group, please contact:

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