



The sounds of spring

By the time you read this, spring will be upon us and the natural sounds of nature will be increasing. As days lengthen through February birds become more active as they search for nesting sites. It's not unusual for song and mistle thrushes to start singing in early January and this year was no exception. Mistle thrushes are known as storm cocks because their song can be heard during stormy weather but song thrushes will also channel their inner Gene Kelly, which was a good job during the very wet start to 2026.



Song thrush, an ornithological Gene Kelly © Gary Farmer

Blackbirds started singing at the beginning of February, which seemed rather early. They were joined by dunnocks, robins, wrens and goldcrests as early as mid-February and in my garden a blackcap joined the chorus, all signalling the start of another early spring. Weather in February and March can be very unpredictable so these early nesters risk getting caught out. Song is the male bird's way of announcing that he's holding a territory and inviting a female to join him, whilst also telling other males of the same species to keep out.

Listen for the different bird songs through spring; you don't need to be able to identify all the songsters, just enjoy them as they announce the start of another year of nature's treasures. But if you want some help, try downloading the Merlin bird app. onto your

phone (even I've done this). It's not 100% accurate but it gives a very good idea as to what you are listening to.

This is also a good time of year to listen out for foxes yipping and gekkering. At times they can sound almost owl-like. Muntjac deer bark at dusk, an eery sound which travels quite far in the still of the half-light, and grey squirrels chatter and squeal from trees. Frogs and toads return to their breeding ponds and a pond full of courting frogs can get very noisy indeed, sounding somewhat like a distant motorbike!



A pond full of courting Frogs can sound like distant motorbikes © Gary Farmer

Indoor Meetings – 2025/2026

Our evening talks continued to be well supported and we have had excellent speakers. Our Christmas Quiz organised by Sue B. was very entertaining and everyone who took part enjoyed the evening. In January we were taken around Britain by Tom Maddock, looking at some of the wildlife spectacles our beautiful country has to offer. In February we entered the wonderful world of bats with Chris Sherlock from BrumBats. At the time of writing we're looking forward to learning from Gael Denny about what goes on at Birmingham Institute of Forest Research – Free-Air-Carbon-Dioxide Enrichment project.

Our indoor meetings are held at:

Winyates Green Community Centre,
Furze Lane, Winyates Green, Redditch, B98 0SE
Talks start at 7:30pm
Members and non-members welcome

April 8th - What to spot in spring: Worcestershire Wildlife Sightings project

Wendy Carter

Recording the county's wildlife. Tracking distribution, abundance, when wildlife is seen and learning how species are doing in a changing world. Find out how you can get involved.

Check the Trust's website closer to the dates for more details of our talks:

www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on

Wildlife Ambles

We are planning some summer walks. Please note these details are all to be confirmed so pencil them in to your diaries but please check before attending.

- Wednesday 13th May 7pm - Arrow Valley
- Saturday 16th May 10am - Pitcheroak
- Wednesday 10th June 7pm - Hipton Hill Orchards
- Saturday 20th June **7am** - Ipsley Alders open moth traps
- Wednesday 8th July 7pm - Morgrove
- Saturday 11th July 10am - Grafton Wood

redditchwwt@googlegroups.com

Local Sightings

The dull, wet winter has not been great for getting out and about but we've received a few wildlife sightings from around Redditch. There have been several reports of blackcaps from gardens and a brambling paid a brief visit to one lucky observer's bird feeder. Skylarks started singing early in February near Tardebigge. Redwings were late arriving but numbers increased around the town between December and February.

If you have seen something of interest, please let us know.

Ideas for walks and talks

If you have ideas for speakers or wild themes you would like to hear about let us know and we'll see if we can arrange something for our next programme.

Quick Quiz - UK Amphibians

by Ellen Boulton



Natterjack Toads © Gary Farmer

- 1) How many amphibian species are native to Britain?
- 2) Which type of newt prefers shallow pools on acidic soil?
- 3) What is the preferred habitat of natterjack toads?
- 4) What is the name of Britain's biggest newt?
- 5) Which amphibians, native to Britain, became extinct in the mid-1990s but have been reintroduced at a handful of sites in Norfolk?

Answers from the Winter Quick Quiz:

- 1) *Water Shrew*
- 2) *Clan*
- 3) *Fox*
- 4) *10,000 years*
- 5) *Pine marten*

Committee

Don't forget that we're still looking for more committee members to keep your local group going.

If you can spare a little bit of time and want to get more involved in promoting wildlife in Redditch, get in touch.

Email: redditchwwt@googlegroups.com