

Southeast Worcestershire Local Group

Spring newsletter 2026



**Worcestershire
Wildlife Trust**

I have tried not to expect the expected this spring. At the time of writing, another dull February day, I am looking forward to better weather, a chance to get out and enjoy the spring as it pushes winter to the back of our minds and we welcome back longer days, warmer weather and the wildlife and plants that we associate with this time of year. My daily walks, as I listen out for birdsong along my path, now include a new level of observation as I note water flowing in ditches that that been dry or, at best, damp for as long as I can recall, wildflowers emerging earlier than I remember that they should.

Swallows are often seen as the quintessential sign of spring as they return after spending winter in Africa. In some areas, however, records show that they arrive back in the UK 15 days earlier than they did 50 years ago. This climate driven change in migration causes them to miss peak insect availability and, in some cases, leaves them vulnerable to unseasonal cold snaps. Today, swallows are another barometer of climate change.

Nick Rose

Did you know?

Until the 19th century, people used to believe that swallows hibernated at the bottom of ponds over winter.

Did you know?

Swallows have specialised, long eyes with two foveae that provide exceptional lateral and frontal vision for tracking fast-moving insects mid-flight.



Dawn Chorus Walk at Tiddesley Wood

Saturday 2nd May 2026

When: 4.30am to start at 5.00am

Meet: Tiddesley Wood car park WR10 2AD (nearest) OS map reference SO 929 462.

Reserve your place: cwolstevesham@googlemail.com

The committee would like to thank everyone for their continued support for our events both indoor and outdoor during the past few months.

We continue as a small committee and would welcome anyone who would like to join us in planning and organising future meetings. If you would like to discuss things informally or find out more please get in touch Chris

cwolstevesham@googlemail.com or Nick nickrose01@btinternet.com

Our visit to Lower Smite Farm

Back in October we organised a visit to Lower Smite Farm, headquarters of the Trust and a 150 acre working farm split between organic farming and meadows/grasslands alongside an orchard and a number of ponds.

The tour began in the traditional orchard where we heard how this is managed for wildlife and how it is only lightly grazed by sheep for a few days per year. The fruit crops are not harvested but we were encouraged to pick and try an apple, including the Pitmaston pineapple variety.

Then we moved to the meadows, which have been developed over the last 15 years; before this they were arable land. We heard how the land was left for the first 10 years before hay was brought in from neighbouring farms to introduce more meadow flowers, such as cowslips, yellow rattle and chicory. There are also wildlife corridors spanning the meadows to encourage mammals, butterflies and insects to move around the farm. Some of the current grassland will be developed into wood pasture within the current plan.

Lower Smite Farm's orchard © Helen Woodman



Lower Smite Farm holds some of the headwaters of the Barbourne Brook, which feeds ponds on the farm, and is important for dragonflies, damselflies, newts, bats and birds. The farm also has colonies of slow-worms and grass snakes and the team maintains a small patch of vines, grown to encourage harvest mice.

We also got to see some fungi; those visible at the time of our visit included yellow field cap and stubble rose gill.

If you have never attended one of the walks arranged by your local group, it's a great way to learn more about the natural environment and to meet like-minded people.

We look forward to seeing you at our dawn chorus walk in May or at one of our indoor talks later this year.

Ian Jewitt

Southern hawkers are common at Lower Smite Farm © Eleanor Reast

