Malvern Local Group

Winter newsletter 2026

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

Talks

Join us on the first Thursday of the month at 7.30pm: Lyttelton Rooms (near Malvern Priory). £3 per person (cash please).

December 3rd 2026
Wonderful winter wildlife - *Ashley Grove*
Ashley is a very experienced speaker on wildlife topics and has his own established business *Experience Nature Ltd* running nature holidays in the UK and overseas. He'll illustrate his talk with his own wildlife photographs taken on his travels around the British Isles. This will hopefully give a solution to winter blues and encourage you out and about to explore the special wildlife we have.

January 7th
Celebrating 50 years - *Mike Perry, CEO, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust*
The inauguration of the Malvern Local Group was 50 years ago. Mike will talk about milestones, highlights and challenges, of the Trust's history during that time and how important the local groups are in helping the Trust deliver its objectives. He will also consider what the future might hold for the Trust. We will have cake!

February 4th
The biology of the River Teme - *Will Watson*
Will is an environmental consultant specialising in freshwater ecology with over 30 years' experience. He has a passion for water beetles and amphibians and has had a water beetle in Mozambique named after him. The River Teme begins its life in Mid Wales and flows eastwards to join the River Severn just south of Worcester. On its journey it supports a wealth of wildlife.

March 4th
Polecats - *Johnny Birks*
Dr Johnny Birks is well known locally as an author, researcher, conservationist and environmental activist. He has written books on pine martens and polecats and edited others on survey methodology. The recovery of polecat in Britain has been described as 'one of the least celebrated wildlife success stories of recent times'. Share in Johnny's knowledge of this secretive, nocturnal mammal's history with us.

April 1st
Insects of Shropshire and their recording - *Nigel Jones*
Nigel was the first Chair of Malvern Local Group in his twenties! He is an entomologist and the Shropshire Recorder for Diptera, the vast order of true flies with around 7000 species recorded in Britain. He has been a project manager for the Field Studies Council where he organised training on a range of entomological subjects.

May 6th
Once there were gants: the past, presence and future of megafauna - *Chantal Lyons*
Chantal is a naturalist, writer and science communicator. Last time she visited us Chantal talked about wild boar and their relationships with people. How big were the megafauna really? What did they eat? What might it have been like for our earliest ancestors to exist alongside them? Until very recently, every chain in the biosphere was held together by these immense beasts. Chantal will explore their natural history with us.

Walks and trips

At least four day trips and possibly an overnight visit are being organised for next year. More details will arrive with your spring magazine. The first trip is being planned for early in the year so please look out for further information via email or **www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on**

Unfortunately Nigel Dunn has had to step down from your group's committee. For several years Nigel has been the secretary, website manager and sender of emails about meetings and ambles. We have been very dependent on his skills and he has played an invaluable role in the running of the group. We are extremely grateful to him for the time and effort he has given.

Could you help to fill the gap? If you feel you could contribute to the running of the group in any way, please get in touch. We really do need you! For more information about how you can help, or to be added to our mailing list to receive details about our talks, walks and trips, email **malverngroup@live.co.uk**. If you sign up to our list, you can unsubscribe at any time.

Fungi season

As we head into autumn we enter the season of fungi. The recent rain will have helped to encourage fungi to produce their fruiting bodies that you may have seen on recent walks around Malvern and beyond.

Fungi occur in a range of sizes from tiny, just a few millimetres across, to bracket fungi that's 30cm across. Remember that they occur in your neighbourhood and not just on nature reserves. Best not to touch them as some are poisonous but some can be identified from a photo. The fungus in the photo was seen in the churchyard of St Mathias in Malvern Link. This is the giant polypore *Meripilus giantess*, which is often found on beech trees.



Tim Lawrence

Can you spot?
Pear rust fungus
Gymnosporangium sabinae

On our latest U3A study group at Poolbrook Common we found a single pear tree, with leaves having an amount of orange spots. This is a fungus with an interesting leaf cycle. If you have an pear tree, you might be familiar with it at this time of year.

Pear rust fungus is a heteroecious rust fungus - it needs two unrelated host plants to complete its life cycle: pear and juniper. It cannot complete its life cycle on either host alone, as different stages of the fungus develop on each plant.

During summer, infected pear leaves develop conspicuous orange or reddish spots. Later, these produce spores that are carried by the wind and can infect susceptible junipers. The fungus then grows within the juniper, sometimes causing swellings and damaging the branches. In spring, particularly in wet weather, infected branches produce spectacular bright orange, gelatinous horns. These release spores that are carried by the wind to pear leaves, starting the cycle again

There aren't many wild junipers in Worcestershire but ornamental ones planted in gardens and parks can act as hosts. These include *Juniperus × media, J. chinensis* and related cultivars. This helps explain why pear rust can be common even where wild juniper is scarce. The presence of the rust on pear trees doesn't necessarily mean that a juniper is growing nearby, since spores can travel some distance in the wind.

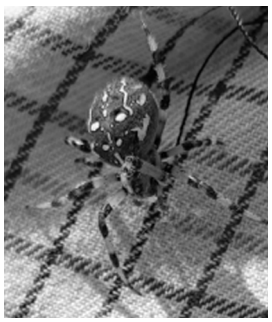


Richard Newton

Of spiders...

Having previously spotted beautiful marbled orb weaver spiders *Araneus pyramidatus* near the laid hedge in Epiphany Meadow (ie. Big Meadow) at The Knapp and Papermill, this year the working party was pleased to spot, on several occasions, another species of orb spider while working in the adjacent meadow. These were four-spotted orb weavers *Araneus Quadratus*.

Following a session of scything in the meadow, the first one was spotted by Josh Nixon on the back of my head. This was transferred to my shirt where Josh took the attached image. Apparently these spiders like areas of long grass where they can prey on grasshoppers etc. We have been clearing the meadow by hand using scythes, slashers, brushcutters and hay rakes. Doing this job by hand has certainly resulted i in getting closer to nature, as the spotting of these spiders has proved.



Brian Iles

There's a spider living in a corner of the stone stairs that go up the bell tower at Great Malvern Priory. We bell ringers go up these stairs several times a week so have seen the web and the spider in residence during the last few months.

There's another in the bell ringers' room at St Gregory's Church, Castlemorton. This is in a gap between the stone wall and a wooden memorial board and has been there, undisturbed, for a couple of years. It doesn't seem to mind the bells!

Alison Hodge