Worcestershire Wildlife Trust

Redditch Local Group

Autumn 2026 newsletter

Garden Visitors

Gary Farmer



Hedgehog © Gary Farmer

The hot, dry summer brought with it problems for much of our wildlife. In our gardens hedgehogs struggled to find food and water, with many people reporting seeing them out before dark in a desperate search for snails and beetles that were hidden away during the dry conditions. Putting out specially blended hedgehog food and bowls of water took over from feeding the birds, which we had been discouraged from doing. In my garden this definitely helped at least three hedgehogs of varying sizes. We watched them most evenings just as dusk was falling as they were pushing and shoving, grunting and sniffing, all wanting the same pile of food. This continued until the nights were drawing in and I found I could still catch a glimpse of our visitors, flicking on the outside light to do so. That is until one evening I turned on the light and stared out to see another visitor staring back at me, a rat the size of a small dog! Sadly, the feeding had to stop.

It wasn't just the rat that benefitted from our hedgehog banquet, two or three squirrels were regularly seen clearing up in the mornings, as were magpies, the occasional fox, one or two cats and even next door's dog got in on the act. Squirrels also made a nuisance of themselves by feeding on fruit. Plums were greedily devoured, being especially juicy in a time of little moisture. I had a report of squirrels testing damsons; one bite per fruit and discarding the rejected damsons onto the ground below the tree. This started out as mildly annoying for the owner of the tree until she starting seeing a pair of mistle thrushes taking advantage of the discarded bounty.

Redwings returned to the town in mid-October, a little later than some years. Their bigger cousins, the fieldfares, started putting in an appearance around the same time.

You never know what might pay a visit to your garden so keep an eye out and let us know of anything interesting.

Indoor Meetings – 2026/2027 Dates for your diaries

Our indoor meetings are held on **Wednesday evenings** at: Winyates Green Community Centre, Furze Lane, Winyates Green, Redditch, B98 0SE
Talks start at 7:30pm
Members and non-members welcome.

Our new season of indoor meetings got off to a really good start. Bradley Knight gave us our first ever dinosaur talk. His enthusiasm was contagious as he talked about animals that lived millions of years ago. This was followed by a team from Severn Rivers Trust to talk about river restoration, including parts of the rivers Arrow and Alne. This drew our biggest audience since the group was relaunched. At the time of writing, we are looking forward to our **November meeting** and hearing about **Rainbow Dust** – a celebration of local butterflies and day-flying moths by Roger Umpleby.

9th December – Fun wildlife-themed quiz
Come and join us for a social evening with a fun, wildlife-themed quiz.

13th January 2027 - speaker to be confirmed

10th February 2027 - Ion Riley, wildlife of Monkwood, Tiddesley and Grafton woods

10th March 2027 Phillip Seaton, orchids

14th April 2027 - John Mabbutt, Exotic birding

Check WWT's website for more details of our talks: www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on

Record Your Sightings

Don't forget Worcestershire's Wildlife Sightings. You should still be able to record some of the target species even in autumn and winter – keep a look for common carder bees, toads and spawn, house sparrows, mistletoe, moles and 7-spot ladybirds.

Submit your sightings of wildlife to:
www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife-sightings

Ideas for walks and talks

If you have any 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 – insects

Julie Jenkins

1) What is unique about water spiders?
2) Which species of grasshopper is the only flightless species in Britain?
3) What is unusual about the compound eyes of whirligig beetles?
4) What distinctive feature gives javelin wasps their common name?
5) Which insects are responsible for the mass of bubbles called cuckoo-spit, often found on lavender?
6) What colour do adult common green shieldbugs turn in winter?

Answers from summer's wildflower quick quiz:
1) Digger wasps
2) Common comfrey
3) March - May
4) Yellowrattle
5) Foxglove

Committee

Don't forget that we're still looking for more committee members to keep the 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: wwtredditch@gmail.com

Wasp spiders on the edge of Redditch



Wasp spider on its distinctive web © Gary Farmer

For quite a few years I have been following the northward movement of many invertebrates. I have been waiting with anticipation for one particular species to make it to Redditch. In 2026 it nearly made it.

Wasp spiders *(Argiope bruennichi)* are large yellow and black orb web spiders that I became familiar with during our many holidays to the Dorset coast, first finding one over 30 years ago. The last two hot summers created the ideal conditions for wasp spiderlings to parachute into the area. They were found in many grassy places in the Vale of Evesham and surrounding area and I had high hopes to finally see one in the borough. They came very close this year with one being reported in Astwood Bank!

These large spiders feed mostly on grasshoppers and craneflies and pose no threat to people and our pets. They often build distinctive webs with a thick zig-zag through the centre where the spider sits and waits for its next meal, hoping its size and wasp-like pattern will prevent it from becoming a meal.

Maybe 2027 will be the year that this striking arachnid makes it into the parks of Redditch. Unless you have already seen one?!