



Castlemorton Common find

This rather strange scarlet spike was found in the Castlemorton area. I took pictures and investigated. It's called scarlet caterpillarclub, a parasitic fungus that grows on a buried moth or caterpillar pupa. When infected, the pupa innards are turned into a mushy mess before a stalk is grown, spores attached, and the lifecycle continues.



I found a few so, as I knew what it was, I dug one up, took a picture and re-buried it. An interesting lifecycle, I thought.



Richard Newton

Vacancies on forthcoming trips

We are very grateful to Lyndon Knott who, spends considerable time organising trips by minibus for your group. There are currently spaces on the following trips:-

Saturday 22nd March: **Tring Natural History Museum**, reservoirs and wildlife centre

Tuesday 15th April: **Shropshire WT reserves** near Oswestry

Wednesday 7th May: **Cors Canon NNR and Strata Florida**

Thursday 29th May: **Martin Down NNR and Middleton Down**, Wiltshire

Thursday 21st August: **Hilbre Island in the Dee Estuary**

Thursday 30th October: **Selbourne**, the home of Gilbert White

Further details can be found on our website malverngroupwwt.org.uk/ Please ring Lyndon Knott on 01905 455222 if you're interested in coming along on a trip.

Indoor meetings

We meet monthly between September and May in the Lyttelton Rooms adjacent to Malvern Priory, starting at 7.30pm.

3rd April: **Saving Orchids - Species Survival in a Changing World** by Philip Seaton, author and Chelsea judge who is actively engaged in orchid conservation.

1st May: **The Mammals of Worcestershire** by Dominique Cragg, the Trust's Western Reserves Officer and Co-Chair of the Worcestershire Mammal Group.

Indoor meetings will begin again on Thursday 4th September.

2025 New Year Plant Hunt

On New Year's Eve 11 plant hunters went searching for plants in flower in the Edith Walk and Back Lane area of Great Malvern, finding 27 species in this small area. The plant hunt is an annual event for the Botanical Society of Great Britain and Ireland (BSBI) that helps to monitor how plants are responding to climate change. Amongst the plants found were ivy-leaved toadflax, scarlet pimpernel, holly, ivy, red valerian, nipplewort, green alkanet, common field speedwell, wild strawberry and wood avens.

Full details are on <https://bsbi.org/>

Tim Lawrence

Walks and ambles

Guided walks around some of our local nature reserves have been arranged by Tim Lawrence during summer. For more information about these and our regular ambles, visit malverngroupwwt.org.uk/, call 07462 327844 or email malverngroup@live.co.uk with mlgamble in the subject.

Sign up for news

To be sent emails about our activities, why not sign up to the Malvern Local Group emailing list? This is a separate list to the one held by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. Please contact:
malverngroup@live.co.uk

Rare spider

During one of our recent working parties at The Knapp we discovered a beautiful rare spider. It turned out to be a marbled orb-weaver. He/she has a leg on a single silk filament to feel any prey vibrations. Note the small silk blob on the filament to keep it taut.



See the Trust's Facebook page <https://bit.ly/WWTMarbledOW> for a colour photo.

Brian Iles

Working at The Knapp and Papermill

The Trust would not be able to manage our nature reserves without the help of many dedicated people. The Knapp and Papermill has a group of about 30 volunteers. Some come regularly every week and some come when they can in between other commitments. We meet every Thursday morning from 9.30am until about 1.00pm with a coffee break mid-morning. This is not just a chance to help the Trust but also a social meeting and a chance to get out in the 'green gym' with a friendly bunch of like-minded people.

The tasks can include:

- clearing and coppicing wooded areas to create various habitats allowing wildflowers to grow and attract insects, birds etc. Some may comment upon why we are cutting down trees but in most cases the coppiced trees will regrow. Some trees have to be removed where they are diseased and present a danger of falling on footpaths or over boundary fences.

- brushcutting and scything brambles, bracken, etc.
- keeping pathways clear for walkers and visitors.
- managing the orchard. Pruning the apple trees and maintaining tree guards to deter deer, sheep etc from chewing the tree bark.
- keeping the Leigh Brook clear and repairing flood damage after heavy rain.
- several of our volunteers look after the bird boxes and record the nesting birds.
- in the summer one of our main tasks is 'balsam bashing', pulling up thousands of the dreaded Himalayan balsam plants that grow and spread along the brook each year.
- repairing and maintaining the many steps and fences around the reserve.
- meeting local walkers and visitors who visit the reserve who often ask why and what we are doing.

If you fancy lending a hand please contact volunteer@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org. You can choose whether you come regularly or on just the odd occasion when you are available. All help is welcome.

Brian Iles

Vale Wildlife Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre

In February's talk, we learned that the various creatures usually arrive at Vale Wildlife Hospital in cardboard boxes. Casualties in 2024 totalled over 8000 individuals of 120+ species. 14 amphibians, 4994 birds, 3072 mammals (1784 of which were hedgehogs) and 11 reptiles required attention.

The hospital, now encompassing rooms, pens and paddocks near Tewkesbury, was started in 1984 by Caroline Gould MBE in her home, determined to do what she could to help the wildlife suffering from injuries caused in the main by humans, albeit mostly unintentionally. Emergency admissions are seen 24/7. The running costs are over £70,000 per month and public support is relied on. For more: www.valewildlife.org.uk

The only opportunity to see behind the scenes is on the hospital's annual Open Day - Sunday 6th July.

Sue Benjamin