



Worcestershire Wildlife Trust



Stourbridge & Hagley Local Group Newsletter

Spring 2025

Stourbridge & Hagley Local Group programme March to August 2025

Talks

at St. Saviours Church Hall, Hagley.

28th March at 7.30pm.

Birds and how they see – compared with humans

A talk by John Medlock

25th April at 7.30pm.

Our Stour

A talk by Graham Beckley

Walks

Tuesday 1st July at 10am.

Romsley Manor Farm Meadows nature reserve

Northern Reserves Officer Andy Harris will lead our walk. The reserve was purchased by the Trust in 2022 and consists of nine fields, six of these being Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Parking is on the reserve if dry and in a large lay-by a short distance away. OS explorer 219 (Wolverhampton & Dudley), grid ref. SO963788.

More walks are being planned so for details of group events please look out for local group emails or visit www.worcestershirowildlifetrust.co.uk/whats-on

Chairman's Report 2024

This has been another successful year for the group with good attendances at both indoor and outdoor meetings together with much valuable work being carried out by our volunteers at Penorchard Meadows and Romsley Manor Farm Meadows.

We commenced the year as usual with our Open Evening and AGM with talks and a quiz. The committee was re-elected unopposed.

In February Gerry Griffiths took us to the southern hemisphere for his talk on the wildlife of Chile and the Falklands, illustrated with many excellent photographs. Rachel Wells gave us a talk on how she and Helen Kelly created a wildlife garden at Gardeners' World Live at the NEC in March.

Our first outdoor meeting of the year was led by Sue and Andy and was entitled The Devil's Spittleful, sand, soldiers and a scary story.

In April John Tilt took us to Scotland for his talk on its wildlife.

In May we had a visit to Lower Smite Farm where Caroline Corsie, the Trust's Senior Land Advisor, showed us how the Trust is demonstrating how you can farm with wildlife in mind. We had two outdoor meetings in the summer, the first being a walk on the quiet side of Kinver Edge led by National Trust ranger



Alex with the group on Kinver Edge

Alex Murison followed by a surprisingly popular walk that I led round my local area; we visited the famous Wordsley Waterfall, which is actually a weir on the River Stour.

After the summer break, in September Gary Farmer gave us a talk about the wildlife of Worcestershire in a time of change. In October we had a talk by Roger Umpelby entitled 'all bugs bright and beautiful' accompanied by his own superb macro-photographs. In November we were due for a talk by Gordon Forrest about Upton Warren. However, with two days to go he went down with the dreaded Covid. Fortunately, Gerry Griffiths was able to step in at the last minute to give us his excellent talk on the wildlife of Norway and Finland.

Finally, in December we had a winter walk around Saltwells Local Nature Reserve.

All that remains is for me to thank my fellow committee members for all their hard work in the past year and to thank you for your support. We look forward to hopefully an equally successful 2025.

John Homer

Walking with the U3A

After a chance meeting at a wildlife talk in Halesowen, Sue and Andy were asked to lead a walk at Penorchard Meadows nature reserve for Halesowen U3A Walking Group. On 9th July a group of 14 met Sue and Andy at the National Trust Nimmings car park. Ian and I joined them as "support crew" to bring up the rear and keep the group together. It was a dull, damp morning but it didn't seem to dampen the group's enthusiasm as we set off down the National Trust fields before crossing Hagley Wood Lane on to the reserve. We followed a circular route on the path round the South Staffs reservoir fields with a diversion into the Bogs Field. There was much interest in the wildlife and history of the reserve as we walked.

The walk at Penorchard was much appreciated by the group and a further walk was planned and enjoyed by all at The Devil's Spittleful on 8th October.

Avril Williams

Jumping in Puddles

"When I became a man I put away childish things."
Paul: 1 Corinthians 13

Of course, we all accept that as we grow older we will have to become more self-disciplined and responsible. But sometimes the pull of the instantaneous joy of childhood is irresistible.

One habit I have never outgrown is to fill my pockets with various treasures as I am walking Maisie: shiny brown conkers and sweet chestnuts, acorns, tiny cones of conifer and ash, sycamore wings and, of course, smooth round pebbles, usually white ones. (Anyone familiar with Grimms' 'Hansel and Gretel' will know that these are essential for finding your way out of a dark wood at night).

In early spring I find myself nibbling on the first fresh green leaves of hawthorn – poor man's "bread and cheese" – and in summer, sampling the juice of clover florets. My sisters and I found red clover the sweetest. We would spend what seemed like hours, watching ants scurrying to save their eggs or fallen comrades after their nest had been damaged. I still find myself doing that now, amazed at their industry and determination

There is nothing like crunching through deep layers of autumn leaves, kicking them into large piles, or trying to isolate and catch one leaf amongst many as they drift down. Then there is the wonder of putting out my tongue to catch the first snowflake.

There is a strange excitement about squelching through thick mud and feeling the dangerous pull and suck as it tries to remove my boots. Those volunteers who work in the claggy clay of Penorcharad will know exactly what I mean!

On the beach I find it impossible not to remove my boots, roll up my trousers and gingerly negotiate the pebbles to paddle in the sea, no matter how cold the water.

..... and then there is the temptation and sheer pleasure of puddles, the width of the path, glinting in the sunlight, just waiting to be disturbed.

So next time you come across one, take a quick look round to make sure no-one is watching, take a deep breath, then go for it! JUMP! SPLASH!

Wendy Wilkins

After dark

We have had a trail camera set up in our Wollaston garden since July 2015. It is fascinating to see what has been recorded during the hours of darkness. The most frequent overnight visitor is a fox, with numbers staying similar since 2018. In January this year a fox was recorded on 14 nights.



Our first record of a badger was 3rd June 2016. It is a fairly infrequent visitor but numbers have been fairly consistent since then. The last badger records were on 20th and 23rd October last year.

It is a different story, however, with hedgehogs. Our records show a dramatic decline in sightings, which seems to be in line with the national fall in

hedgehog numbers. Between 16th March and 1st September 2019 a hedgehog was recorded on 35 occasions. In 2023 there were only five records all year and last year there was only one record on 26th August. Will we record a hedgehog in 2025?

Avril Williams

Penorcharad Meadows update

Late autumn at Penorcharad Meadows is the customary time for control of scrub regrowth and



Rakes progress!

bramble, particularly in the fields around the reservoir. So, following a visit from a contractor with his flail, much time has been spent raking and removing the debris to allow in light and encourage the growth of flowering

plants. We have also repaired fences and cut back overhanging tree branches that were shading part of the meadow.

Following the winter storms there was significant damage to a number of trees and we have cleared debris from rights of way and access routes. There is still more remedial work to be done but this will be tree surgeon work.

Ian Williams

Penorcharad Meadows 2024

In 2024 there were only 11 work party days at Penorcharad Meadows (in June there was no one to lead on the day so the work party was cancelled). Those 11 months added up to an amazing 181 days of volunteering and about 905 hours of group-working on the reserve. Much has been achieved but the list of jobs never seems to get shorter. A huge **thank you** to our Penorcharad volunteers from Sue, Andy and Ian for all your hard work in 2024.

Avril Williams

Volunteer days at Penorcharad Meadows

Work parties are usually held on the first Monday of the month from 10am – 3pm on
April 7th May 12th (5th is May Day) June 2nd
July 7th August 4th

Volunteer days at Romsley Manor Farm Meadows

Work parties are usually held on the third Monday of the month from 10am – 3pm on
March 17th April 28th (21st is Easter Monday)
May 19th June 16th July 21st August 18th

If you are interested in giving volunteering a go contact Andy Harris on
andyh@worcestershireswildlifetrust.org