

Changing the face of nature

The effects of climate change are already visible in the British countryside this winter.

Nature is confused - trees flowered in December and butterflies have been active in January.

Climate change presents major challenges to our flora and fauna including a greater risk of extreme and unseasonable weather events, summer droughts, high levels of winter snow and rainfall, and eventually, colder temperatures due to the slowing of the Gulf Stream. The timing of seasonal events and marked regional variations in climate may permanently alter the distribution of native species and the composition of habitats.



Great Crested Newt

Wildlife Winners and Losers More summer sunshine might benefit reptiles such as common lizards and grass snakes, but droughts will dry out their wetlands and heathlands, increasing fire risk and resulting in the loss of some species. Cold-sensitive birds including song thrush, wren and long-tailed tit may be more likely to survive mild winters, and increased river flooding may create new opportunities for wildfowl and waders. Fish populations will be adversely affected by warmer water temperatures, and flood water will enrich or erode the soil adjacent to rivers and streams.

Frogs, toads and newts may decline due to the drop in water levels at their breeding ponds in summer.

There is also a disparity between the availability of nectar, seeds and insects, and the needs of the animals that eat them. Blue tits are breeding earlier due to the availability of insects and grubs living on trees coming into leaf early, but the young will then struggle to find the seed sources they need as they mature. Research also shows that some flowers open before bees wake up, depriving them of early nectar and the chance to pollinate the flowers. Bluebells are being out-competed by neighbouring plants and trees that start growing earlier than before.

Further pressure on food and habitats is caused as birds such as swallows stay put rather than fly south for the winter, and European birds and insects, including agricultural pests and invasive alien species, extend their range into the UK. Some native wildlife which is unable to adapt to local changes may be able to move north and to higher ground, but species that can't do this will decline or become extinct. Species currently at the northern edge of their range in Leicestershire and Rutland, such as Roesel's bush cricket and some butterflies may become more common, provided there is suitable habitat.



Roesel's bush cricket

Habits and Habitats The composition of soils will alter, affecting the type of vegetation that can be supported, destabilising soil structure and permanently changing the land. As humans try to adapt their own farming, forestry, water management and living habits, the space, food and resources available to wildlife is likely to reduce.

Expanding and connecting wildlife rich areas forms an important part of the Wildlife Trust's efforts to work on a larger scale, creating landscapes that allow wildlife to adapt and move more easily across the countryside. Local Wildlife Sites play a significant role in helping wildlife to cope with the major challenges ahead.

and finally... Works on ponds, streams, grasslands, woodlands and hedgerows is not straightforward as there is no longer a 'safe' time to do it; disturbing or destroying breeding, nesting or hibernating creatures could happen at virtually any time of year so extra care should be taken when carrying out potentially damaging tasks.

If you need any information or advice about your sites contact us:

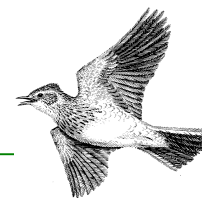
- Neill Talbot: 0116 272 8858 or ntalbot@lrwt.org.uk
- Katie Field: 0116 272 8859 or kfield@lrwt.org.uk

Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust, Brocks Hill Environment Centre,
Washbrook Lane, Oadby, Leicester, LE2 5JJ Web: www.lrwt.org.uk

Local Wildlife Sites are selected locally, but recognised nationally for their great wildlife value. They are the best places for wildlife outside legally protected areas, and range from streams and meadows to woodlands and hedgerows.



Leicestershire
& Rutland
Wildlife Trust



Home Help

Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society would like to work with more landowners and managers to increase the numbers of Red & Amber List bird species in the area.

In 2011 Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society gave several owners of Local Wildlife Sites practical help & advice about nest boxes, sometimes helping with the cost of boxes. This has worked well with many boxes being used, sometimes by the species for which they were intended!



Nest boxes can give young birds a better chance of survival

Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society would like to work with more landowners and managers to increase the numbers of Red & Amber List bird species in the area. If this sounds good to you, please let LROS know the details of how you would like to use nest boxes and the associated habitat to encourage wildlife. In return for any help given, LROS would expect feedback on the wildlife use of the boxes and breeding successes, and a specified member to be allowed to monitor the boxes.

The current Red & Amber List species for which nest box provision may help in our area are:

Barn Owl, Dunnock, Grey Wagtail, House Martin, House Sparrow, Kestrel, Marsh Tit, Redstart, Spotted Flycatcher, Starling, Swallow, Swift, Tree Sparrow and Willow Tit.

Contact LROS through Russell Parry

Tel: 0116 2737189 E-mail: russell.parry@gmail.com

New flood relief scheme launched

Farming and Water for the Future is an exciting new project led by the OnTrent initiative, a partnership that includes the National Farmers' Union, local authorities and businesses.

The main aim of this voluntary project is to reduce flood risk to the settlements to the south of Leicester, along the Broughton Astley and Whetstone Brook catchments, through land use and land management change.

Together with farmers and landowners FWF hopes to develop practical solutions to this problem that also deliver other benefits such as improved habitats for wildlife and recreational opportunities.

Funding is available for creating water storage areas, restoring rivers and drainage channels and shrub and tree planting on land.

Contact Andy Jackson for further information on 0116 305 7221.



Trouble ahead

Learn how to make your own green roof

As well as providing a range of habitats for wildlife, green roofs soak up heavy rain preventing flooding and help us adapt to climate change.

A green roof is a roof or deck onto which vegetation is intentionally grown or habitats for wildlife are established. Sheds, barns, and garages are all ideal for green roofs.

On 25th February 2012, Dusty Gedge and John Little, two of the UK experts in green roofs will be running a one day course at Brocks Hill Environment Centre, Oadby. The day will cover the benefits of green roofs, types of plants to grow on them and a practical session on building your own green roof for a simple structure. All participants will be able to take home their own mini green roof.

The cost is £50 per person and booking is essential. **For further information and to book your place, contact:**

Kay Snowdon on 07913 630291 or email kaysnowdon@yahoo.co.uk

The Wildlife Trust is working in partnership with organisations such as ADAS, CLA, Defra, FWAG, NFU and local authorities to ensure the success of this project.