

Wild

Membership magazine

Autumn 2023

Leicestershire and Rutland

HOME TO ROOST

Making homes for sand martins at Rutland Water

HERE BE DRAGONS

Six of the best sites for seeing damselflies and dragonflies

Charnwood *charms*

Discover how we are boosting
wildlife in Charnwood Forest



**Leicestershire
& Rutland**
Wildlife Trust

Welcome

Changing times



Welcome to the autumn issue of *Wild* magazine. I hope you have enjoyed your summer and are looking forward to the subtle changes as the seasons turn and cooler weather returns.

One of the delights of engaging with nature is watching the seasons come and go. Each has its own special character and unique appeal. It is difficult to pick a favourite season, but autumn is probably the time of year I love the most. There are those life-affirming woodland walks as trees take on their colourful hues. Then there are the clear, crisp mornings with that invigorating freshness to the air.

Autumn also marks the end of my first year working for the Trust. It has been a wonderful experience but one that has gone far too quickly! I am looking forward to meeting more of you over the coming months as I visit some of the Local Groups. Please do come and say hello.

Together we are working hard for a more wildlife-rich future – one where nature forms an intricate part of our everyday lives. To help achieve this we have recently completed some changes to the way the Trust is structured, which will help us deliver our strategy for bringing nature back. We need to grow our income so that we can do more for nature and have created a Head of Fundraising post to enable this. This means we can actively explore new opportunities and sources of income.

Our ambition also means partnering with others and promoting the work that we do, while talking to grant-giving organisations to raise the funds that will give us the resources to go out and do even more. I am very excited for the future of the Trust and what can be achieved for local wildlife. Thank you for your ongoing support.

Mat Carter

CEO



AJ CANN



TERRY WHITTAKER / 2020 VISION

10



24

ZSUZSANNA BRID

Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust *Get in touch*



WILD Leicestershire and Rutland is the membership magazine for **Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust** and is free to members.

Email info@lrwt.org.uk

Telephone 0116 262 9968

Address The Old Mill, 9 Soar Lane, Leicester, LE3 5DE

Website lrwt.org.uk

Registered charity number 210531

facebook.com [/leicwildlife](https://www.facebook.com/leicwildlife)

twitter.com [/leicwildlife](https://twitter.com/leicwildlife)

instagram.com [/leicwildlife](https://www.instagram.com/leicwildlife)

linkedin.com [/company/leicwildlife/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/leicwildlife/)

Protecting and enhancing the wildlife and wild places of Leicestershire and Rutland and engaging people with nature.

Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust

Chair Ann Tomlinson

Vice Chair Bob Bearne

Hon. Secretary Peter Williams

Hon. Treasurer Andy Thorpe

CEO Mat Carter

Head of Reserves Joe Davis

Supporter Development Manager

Josephine Taylor

The Wildlife Trust Magazine Team

Editor Benedict Vanheems

Designers Kolt Graphic Design

UK Editor Tom Hibbert

UK Designer Ben Cook

Cover image Ross Hoddinott, naturepl.com

Views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor, CEO or the Council of the Trust. Articles, letters, photographs and artwork are welcomed on the understanding that no liability for their safe custody or return is incurred and the right to abridge or refuse publication is reserved.



JON HAWKINS / SURREY HILL PHOTOGRAPHY



JANINA HOLUBECK

Contents

4 Wild news

All the latest stories from LRWT and around the country.

10 Your Wild Autumn

Marvel at the wonders of nature, from water voles to toadstools.

12 Charming Charnwood

The Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme delivers.

18 Wild Autumn Walk

Pull on your walking boots! It's time to explore Ulverscroft.

20 Here be dragons

Dragon and damselflies fascinate with their aerial antics. Where to see them.

22 Home to roost

Meet the sand martins that call Rutland Water home.

24 Arachnotopia!

Why spiders are awesome and how we are recording them.

26 Wildlife gardening

Grow herbs, fruit and veg in tune with nature, suggests Kate Bradbury.

28 My Wild Life

Taras Bains is determined to help others look after natural habitats.

30 The wild west

Discover the enchanting world of Britain's very own rainforests.

34 Events and activities

Get out and about with our guide to events and activities.

6 ways to get involved with your local Wildlife Trust

Legacy You can include a gift in your Will for wildlife and the future of our local natural world. lrwt.org.uk/legacy

Volunteer Could you offer your skills and time to help look after local wildlife? We would love to hear from you. lrwt.org.uk/volunteer

Businesses Become a corporate supporter of LRWT and make wildlife part of your business. lrwt.org.uk/corporate

Gift membership Help someone feel more connected to nature by signing them up as a member. lrwt.org.uk/gift-membership

Local groups Be inspired by walks, talks, events and activities in your local area. lrwt.org.uk/local-groups

Appeal support Donate to one of our appeals so we have the resources to help even more local wildlife. lrwt.org.uk/appeals

WILD NEWS

All the latest local and national news from The Wildlife Trusts



Rhinoceros beetle



Beetle mania!

The beetle loggery

Surveys at Rutland Water Nature Reserve over the last year have totted up an incredible 610 species of beetle, taking the total number of beetle species found at the reserve to 776! This makes beetles the most abundant group of organisms identified on the site.

The surveys were carried out by volunteers Steve Lane, Graham Finch and Anona Finch, working alongside Species and Recording Officer Tim Sexton. The 'Fab Four', as they became known, set out to create a baseline of beetle records for the reserve.

Incredibly, 22 species were identified as being new to Leicestershire and Rutland and almost 70 are considered nationally scarce or of conservation concern. These included a number of reed beetles, a group of wetland specialists only found in reedbeds – one of which hadn't been seen in the counties since 1895!

While Rutland Water is internationally recognised for its overwintering water birds, several insect groups have been well studied here, including moths, which closely follow beetles with 745 species recorded.

The results of the beetle surveys coincide with the opening of a new 'hotel' for beetles at the nature reserve, created by staff and volunteers. The beetle loggery contains more than 100 logs and stands up to 3.5m tall. The sculptural installation replicates standing deadwood, one of the rarest kinds of deadwood habitat, and will provide a home for a range of saproxylic (deadwood associated) beetles as it slowly decays. Target species include the rhinoceros beetle and the lesser stag beetle, smaller relatives of the stag beetle.



To the forest!

Pupils from Melton's Birchwood School were given the opportunity to visit Melton Country Park for nine mornings of Forest School this spring, thanks to support from Melton Building Society.

The sessions began with a sensory walk, touch treasure hunt and smelly pots activity led by our Education Officer Rachel Ibbotson. The following weeks saw children explore further, including discovering signs of spring, a nature-themed World Book Day, leaf printing,

building dens and making nests. For their final session the students chose to mud paint, hunt for minibeasts and birdwatch.

Each pupil completed eight activities to gain a Wildlife Watch Hedgehog Award for investigating wildlife, being creative, spotting wildlife and helping local wildlife.

"They really enjoyed their time experiencing the wooded area through sensory activities, being creative and discovering about wildlife," adds Rachel.

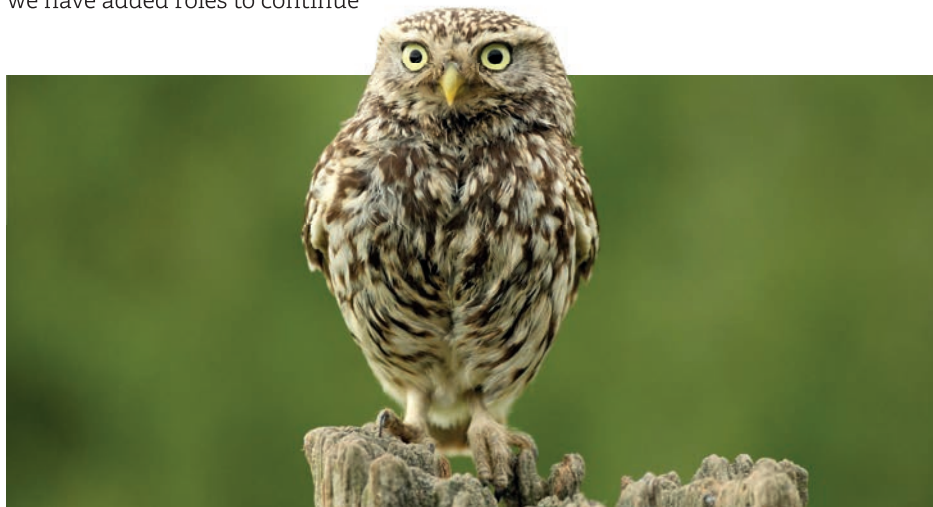
Facing the future

We are excited to announce a restructure of LRWT to align our organisation more closely with our strategy, particularly in relation to targets around nature recovery and engagement. Long-term financial sustainability is also essential, and the restructure should help with this.

Management of our nature reserves has been separated out from the delivery of our nature recovery activities, with a dedicated focus on the latter. There is better structure and integration within the reserves team, who will provide a lead on our engagement activities, and we have added roles to continue

our Nextdoor Nature and Team Wilder projects. Increased fundraising and administrative support will provide the resources we need to continue moving forward.

Our future ambitions call for more income streams and a new Head of Fundraising will help us to achieve this. We have established a dedicated team around membership support and development to retain a focus on this key area. Our ambition is to grow the structure and reach of the Trust as income allows.



LUKE MASSEY/2020DIVISION



Summer fun

Hundreds of children enjoyed a summer packed full of Wild Play. Children and their families got to explore wildlife through the Wild Play activities at Burbage Common and Attenborough Arboretum. They built dens, pond dipped for water minibeasts, safely lit and cooked over fires, made cleaver juice, charmed worms and identified wild flowers. Thanks to our partners Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and The Wild Flower Society for their support.

Will power

Every September charities come together to raise awareness of charitable giving in Wills. This year's Remember a Charity Week runs from 11-17 September.

Leaving a gift in your Will is one of the most meaningful ways you can support local wildlife. We have a vision for a wilder future and with the help of gifts in Wills we can turn that vision into reality. Your gift could help us to make more space for nature by restoring and reconnecting wild places or enable us to empower more people to take action for nature. With your support, future generations will be able to enjoy and experience nature just as you do today.

We have teamed up with Guardian Angel

to offer members a free Will writing service. You can set up your Will online, by phone or in person, and while many members decide to leave a gift to us as part of that, there is absolutely no obligation to do so.

Leaving a gift to LRWT in your Will, no matter how big or small, will have a tremendous impact on our work. If you would like to find out more, please visit lrwt.org.uk/legacy where you can download our helpful Legacy Booklet, drop us an email at info@lrwt.org.uk or give us a call in confidence on 0116 262 9968.



Write your will for free!
Visit: gawill.uk/LRWT

REMEMBER US IN
YOUR WILL
Help our work live on...



AMY LEWIS

UK NEWS

UK UPDATE

Nature reserves along the route of HS2, like Calvert Jubilee in Buckinghamshire, have been destroyed.

CALVERT JUBILEE © MARK VALANCE

On the wrong track

More than 100,000 people have signed The Wildlife Trusts' open letter to the UK Government about HS2, after our latest report into the project highlighted major errors in HS2 Ltd's calculations – meaning more nature will be lost along the line than was agreed by the Government, and attempts to repair the damage the scheme is causing will be inadequate. The letter urges the Government to oblige HS2 Ltd to accurately recalculate its figures, providing a more realistic picture of the scale of the damage.

Our new report, *HS2 double jeopardy*, was the result of an almost year-long audit of HS2's official nature loss calculations. The report revealed a number of errors and causes for concern, including inconsistent mapping and modelling, wild spaces and habitats being undervalued, and huge numbers of trees entirely missing from the calculations.

HS2 Ltd promised that nature would not lose out when much-loved natural areas and important habitats were destroyed to make way for construction of the high-speed rail line. Our report found that HS2 Ltd's 'accounting tool' for

assessing impacts on nature is untested, out of date and fundamentally flawed.

Construction on HS2 has already caused irreparable damage to precious wildlife sites; it's vital that HS2 Ltd and the Government listen to our concerns and act accordingly. Now is the time to reflect on the failings of the scheme so far and rethink the next steps, to prevent further excessive damage to our natural world. The Government needs to learn from HS2 to ensure that future 'green' infrastructure truly can support nature's recovery rather than exacerbating its loss. Find out more at wildlifetrusts.org/hs2

Our open letter called for HS2 to:

Re-map existing habitats along Phases 1 and 2a, correcting mapping errors, applying the correct nature values to habitats, and ensuring no habitats are excluded.

Immediately pause all construction and enabling works and halt the passage of the Phase 2b Hybrid Bill while these latest audit findings are assessed by the Government.

Recalculate the total impacts to nature, by using an up to date and proven methodology, such as one directly comparable to the government's current Biodiversity Metric 3.1. If changes to the methodology are made these should be transparent and evidence based. It is critical that HS2 Ltd ensures all data is made publicly available at the point the figures are released to facilitate transparency and enable independent scrutiny.

Change the scheme's design and delivery to limit the adverse impacts and enhance biodiversity in a way that is commensurate with the scale of the damage, i.e. by achieving a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain for replaceable habitats for each phase of the scheme. Once impacts have first been avoided, limited and compensated for, Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was before the development took place by 'delivering more for nature than is lost'.

UK UPDATE

Wild Isles on location with Wildlife Trusts

This spring, viewers were captivated by Sir David Attenborough's latest documentary, *Wild Isles*. The show celebrated the wildlife of the British Isles, demonstrating to an audience of millions that the UK is home to incredible animals, dramatic battles for survival, and internationally important wild places. Many of the spectacular scenes shown in the documentary were captured on Wildlife Trust nature reserves.

The cameras revealed the incredible lifecycle of the large blue butterfly at Daneway Banks in Gloucestershire, where caterpillars trick ants into accepting them into their nest. At Wiltshire's Langford Lakes they filmed hobbies hawking for dragonflies,

snatching them from the air with lightning reflexes, whilst at Lackford Lakes in Suffolk they revealed rabbits being hunted by buzzards. Flowers featured strongly as well, from buzzing meadows to the fly-fooling lords-and-ladies, with visits to Avon's Prior's Wood and Hutton Woods, Gloucestershire's Lower Woods, and Wiltshire's Clattinger Meadows.

Sir David himself travelled to Skomer Island in Pembrokeshire to marvel at Manx shearwaters and sit amongst the puffins as he reflected on the threats facing our wild isles. The show didn't shy away from discussing the worrying declines in our wildlife, or the actions that have led to them.



Wildflower meadows are essential habitats for pollinators

Long may they bloom

This year marks the tenth anniversary of Coronation Meadows, a restoration project launched in 2013 to celebrate 60 years since the coronation of Elizabeth II. As part of the project, many Wildlife Trusts provided seeds from their own meadows to create or restore meadows

in other parts of their region. Wildlife Trusts also took on custodianship of some of the new meadows, helping wildlife flourish. A new audit has revealed the success of the project, with 101 new wildflower meadows created or restored over the last decade.

UK HIGHLIGHTS

Discover how The Wildlife Trusts are helping wildlife across the UK



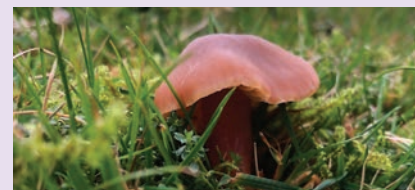
1 Birds not birdies

The Scottish Wildlife Trust is part of a coalition of seven environmental organisations fighting to save rare coastal dunes from the construction of a golf course. Proposals to develop Coul Links in East Sutherland threaten irreparable harm to a vital and protected habitat. The proposals come just three years after a previous application was turned down due to the damage it would cause nature. wtru.st/coul-links-proposal

2 Fungi find

An incredibly rare fungus has been discovered in a survey by Manx Wildlife Trust and the Isle of Man Fungus Group, working with Manx farmers. The butterscotch waxcap, *Gliophorus europerplexus*, had never been recorded on the island before, with only 70 specimens of the species recorded worldwide.

wtru.st/new-waxcap



3 Healing nature

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust has launched a new 10-week nature-based therapy programme for veterans and service leavers living with mental health issues. Wild Transitions will take place at the Trust's Green Lane Wood nature reserve, providing a space for veterans to connect with nature and learn skills to help them transition into new employment or volunteer roles.

wtru.st/WildTransitions

**Iolo Williams** @IoloWilliams2

From beyond the brink



“ Reintroduction is a hot topic in conservation. It’s essentially bringing a species back to an area from which it has been lost. In my opinion, reintroduction should be a last resort. We should be working hard to hold on to what we’ve got without letting it get to that stage. We should have a government doing an awful lot more to stop wildlife from being lost, and to help threatened species recover.

But our wildlife is in a sorry state. It’s been said many times that we are one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world – when I look around now and think about what we’ve lost since I was a young lad walking the fields of mid Wales, I can believe it. Curlews, lapwings, yellowhammers, linnets; pools full of frogs, toads, and newts – so many have now disappeared. It’s not too late to save these species, but for others, last resorts are all we have left.

Where species have gone extinct from an area because of human activity, I think reintroducing them is very much justified. Especially so when species have a hugely positive impact on the environment, bringing benefits for a whole host of other plants and animals. Take beavers, for example. They create and maintain incredible wetland habitats, providing ideal conditions for many species, from water plants to amphibians to fish. This habitat creation is more important than ever as hot, dry summers become more frequent.

Thanks to reintroductions, there are now wild beavers back in Scotland, with a few in England too. But Wales is lagging behind. Beavers are back in Wales, but legally only

in enclosures. I was privileged enough to be there when they arrived. It was an amazing feeling to be a small part of this event, but imagine how much better it would be to see them in the wild.

I’ve been quite shocked at the opposition to reintroducing beavers. I think a lot of it comes from a lack of understanding of beaver behaviour and how many benefits they bring. Yes, there may be one or two areas of conflict, but there are plenty of measures to mitigate this. It’s already been done successfully in countries across Europe, where people now live happily alongside beavers. Any mention of reintroducing lynx raises even more opposition in some places, but I also think there’s a place for lynx in the UK. We have big problems with overgrazing as a result of high deer populations, and lynx could help with that. I’d be very interested to see them return and what effect they would have.

I’m obviously concerned about wildlife across the whole of the UK, but as a Welshman what I would really love to see is the reintroduction of both beavers and golden eagles to Wales. We had an escaped golden eagle set up home here for over 10 years and it had a fantastic reception from the local community, including farmers. Some were overawed by the beauty and the sheer size of her. It would be fantastic to see golden eagles back in Wales for good. ”

Find out all about Wildlife Trust reintroduction projects:

wildlifetrusts.org/reintroductions

TRIED AND TRUSTED

The Wildlife Trusts have been involved in many successful reintroduction projects across the UK, including the return of beavers. We’ve also helped bring back water voles, pine martens, dragonflies, and butterflies to parts of the UK from which they’ve been lost.

Iolo Williams is a Welsh ornithologist, conservationist, and popular wildlife presenter, known for programmes including BBC’s *Springwatch* and *Wild Wales*. He has been supportive of The Wildlife Trusts for a long time and in 2021 took on the role of vice president of The Wildlife Trusts.

News from #teamWILDER

How we've been inspired by our members, volunteers and supporters.

Wild in the city



Nextdoor Nature has been working with county botanist and LRWT member Russell Parry and his colleague Lindsay-Anne Heald who have in mind a plant recording project called StreetWild. Together we organised an urban botany walk across Leicester in partnership with Leicester City Council as part of their Walk Leicester Festival.

Russell and Lindsay-Anne have a passion for the diverse plant life that thrives across the urban environment: in the cracks of pavements, on roundabouts, in the verges, or in the brickwork and structures that form our city. They are generous with their knowledge and keen to share the importance that plant diversity plays in the health of people and nature.

Together we are all trying to change the narrative that wild plants (which we really must stop calling 'weeds') should be sprayed and grass mown neat and tidy. These are outdated ideas. We need to educate everyone about the beauty and importance of the often-overlooked, unsung plant heroes that exist in plain sight of us all.

The walk started on Thurcaston Road and finished at Belgrave Cemetery. It highlighted the common plants you would be likely to see elsewhere on the



paths you take every day within the city. Russell and Lindsay-Anne pointed out plants of interest, their history and some fun facts. Plants such as shepherd's purse with its distinctive heart-shaped seed pods, or herb-robert with its leaf tips shaped like tiny Taj Mahal roofs were looked at in detail and awe.

Lindsay-Anne is also an artist and created an ID chart for the walk. Paper copies were handed out to each participant, while a QR code took people directly to a website with the same information and links to NatureSpot, iRecord and other national databases so

that participants could log their sightings there and then. A more comprehensive record of city plant diversity will help give a broader picture of its essential role.

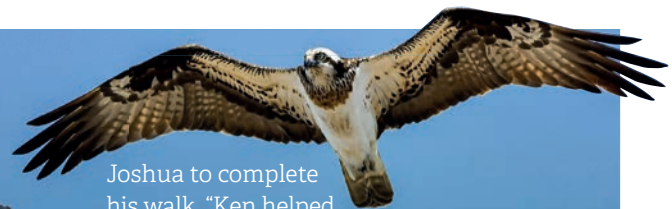
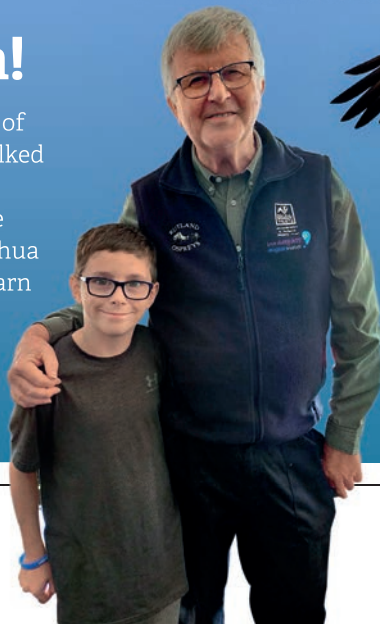
We have got our thinking caps on as to how we can engage a wider population to help support the recording of plants across the city. If you would like to know more about Nextdoor Nature please do contact Fee Worton, Nextdoor Nature Community Organiser at fworton@lrwt.org.uk

Nextdoor Nature

Well done Joshua!

Congratulations to 10-year-old Joshua, one of our Osprey Ambassadors, who recently walked 22 miles around Rutland Water! The keen ornithologist walked with his mum to raise money for the Rutland Osprey Project. Joshua was keen to encourage other children to learn about conservation.

Ken Davies (pictured), our retired and former Osprey Education Officer and author of the 'Ozzy' book series, inspired



Joshua to complete his walk. "Ken helped me begin my journey into the project and believes in my ability to help nature thrive."

We think Joshua's an absolute star, raising more than £1,500 which will go towards ongoing work within the project. Well done Joshua!

Visit lrwt.org.uk/fundraise for details of how you too can fundraise for us.



Your wild autumn

The best of the season's wildlife and where to enjoy it on your local patch

AUTUMN SPECTACLE

Don't call me Ratty!

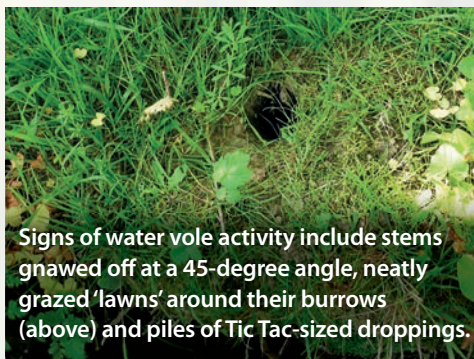
Chestnut-coloured water voles aren't to be confused with rats, which are larger and have a more pointed head. This water-loving mammal is altogether 'cuter', with its smaller ears, blunt nose and furry tail. Water voles prefer more open stretches of water with plenty of vegetation – no surprise given they must eat around 80% of their body weight every day!

Habitat loss and fierce predation by the introduced American mink have hammered their numbers, making the water vole Britain's fastest declining mammal. If you are lucky enough to see a water vole, please take a moment to record your sighting, noting where and when you saw it. Email the Leicestershire and Rutland Mammal Group at LandRmammals@gmail.com or submit your sighting at naturespot.org

SEE THEM THIS AUTUMN

Water voles are hard to spot but you may hear the 'plop' of a water vole as it dives into the water. Look and listen out for them along the following stretches of water:

- **Ashby Canal:** Search the section between Hinckley and Snarestone.
- **Rutland Water Nature Reserve:** Water voles were successfully reintroduced here in 2011.
- **Upper Soar Valley:** Explore from the village of Croft to Aylestone Meadows, Leicester.



KAREN LLOYD

Signs of water vole activity include stems gnawed off at a 45-degree angle, neatly grazed 'lawns' around their burrows (above) and piles of Tic Tac-sized droppings.



TERRY WHITAKER/2020VISION

You're helping!

Your membership helps fund mink control and regular monitoring surveys at Rutland Water Nature Reserve where water voles are now thriving.

Time to explore

Discover the natural world around you

Fly hi



JON HAWKINS/SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY

Say hello to the instantly recognisable fly agaric from late summer, a fungus steeped in legend and fairy tales. The shaggy, wart-like spots are in fact the remains of tissue that covered the cap as it emerged. Heavy rains can wash them off, fully exposing the smooth, scarlet cap beneath.

Fly agaric gets its name from its traditional use as an insecticide. The caps can be crumbled into saucers of milk where the ibotenic acid they contain dissolves, attracting flies who come to drink but then succumb and perish. It is highly toxic to humans too, inflicting severe stomach cramps and hallucinations if eaten.


Despite their questionable attributes, these charismatic toadstools are always a joy to come across and a clear sign of the changing seasons. Look for them on heaths and in

woodlands, especially those with pine, spruce or birch with which it forms a symbiotic relationship. The fly agaric's mycelium attaches to the tree's roots to transfer nutrients, while the tree returns the favour by passing sugars to the fungus.

SEE THEM THIS AUTUMN

► **Dimmisdale** Famous for its winter snowdrops, autumn sees the turn of fungi, including fly agaric.

► **Great Merrible Wood** Home to one of the greatest variety of fungi of any wood in Leicestershire.

 Know your wood blewit from your scarlet elfcup? Brush up on your ID skills at lrwt.org.uk/wildlife-explorer/fungi

Leaving home

Fox cubs grow up fast. Born in spring, they are honing their hunting skills by summer and by early autumn will have reached full size. As competition and tensions rise, the family unit inevitably breaks up. Larger foxes disperse to find their own territories, while some vixens may remain to help raise next year's litter.

JON HAWKINS



TRY THIS

The final vestiges of summer offer the perfect excuse for a garden campout. Spot the bats as they emerge to feed, enjoy the glow of a campfire and wake up to birdsong.

SEE THIS

Jays love to feast on acorns as they fatten up ahead of the colder months. Judicious jays will also bury excess acorns to dig up and eat later on in the winter.



MARGARET HOLLAND

Did you know?

Toadstools are the above-ground fruiting bodies of a fungus. Other toadstools include the fairy rings found in lawns and common inkcaps.

Spot on

Ladybirds are the gardener's best friend, devouring vast numbers of aphids and other pests. The UK is home to more than 26 different species, including the harlequin ladybird, an Asian ladybird first observed here 20 years ago.

7-spot

No awards for guessing how the 7-spot ladybird got its name! Like the equally common 2-spot, it can congregate in large numbers.



DAWN MONROE

14-spot

This small ladybird has up to 14, sometimes merging, spots on its wing cases. One of three yellow ladybirds in the UK.



AMY LEWIS

Harlequin

It varies in appearance and can be black with red spots or vice versa. The number of spots varies too. Now a common sight.



AMY LEWIS

Championing Charnwood

Leicestershire's Charnwood Forest boasts a unique landscape unlike anywhere else in the East Midlands. The Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme is working hard to promote awareness of this special place and enhance its wildlife value, as Acting Head of Nature Recovery Dr Helen O'Brien explains.

Charnwood Forest is one of the most significant landscapes in our region. Its rocky outcrops include some of the oldest rocks in England, formed as sediments in the seas around an ancient volcano nearly 600 million years ago. Locked within some of these unusual rocks is the earliest evidence we have for complex animal life on Earth, evidence found in only a very small number of places globally.

The landscape here is defined by granite-topped hills, wooded valleys, heathlands and grasslands, which together host a wealth of nationally and internationally important species associated with its acid and neutral grasslands, rock formations and soils.

In recognition of its value, the Charnwood Forest Regional Park



was formed in 2012 to coordinate the people and agencies responsible for its future. Despite its unique significance, the landscape still has no statutory protection. However, the area has recently been identified as a Geopark and the Partnership is working towards an application to UNESCO for Global Geopark status.

A scheme is born

Following a successful application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2019, which awarded almost £3 million, the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme was established to provide the motivation and commitment needed to improve the

management of Charnwood Forest. The five-year scheme will run until summer 2025 and is led by the National Forest Company with supporting organisations leading on areas where they can have most influence. LRWT is proud to be leading on two important elements of Project 10, 'A Coherent Wildlife Network'.

The aim of this part of the project is to create a bigger, better and more joined up approach to managing Charnwood Forest by linking up and extending out from the core area where the best habitats have survived.

Our part of the project focuses on grasslands, with





Altar Stones sits atop a rocky hilltop typical of Charnwood Forest.

CHRISWELLS

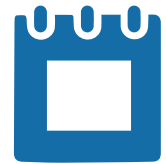


Betony growing at Coalville Meadows, a fine example of neutral grassland.

JANINA HOUUBECKI

 Total scheme value of **£3.7 million**

Scheme runs **July 2020 – June 2025**



 **18** partner organisations

18 projects

to encourage the exploration, understanding and care of Charnwood Forest



the aim of improving both the area and condition of acid and neutral meadows.

Both acid and neutral grasslands have suffered a huge loss in the last 70 years. They have become fragmented, disconnected and less diverse, which means they are not as valuable for wildlife. The biggest impact has been on pollinators, which need a range of flowers over a long season to feed on, as well as good connectivity to move around between sites.

New life for grasslands

The Trust has used a Biodiversity Audit and Landscape Character Assessment commissioned by the Partnership to identify areas where grassland habitats could be improved or connected in some way. Working with landowners and on our

own nature reserves, we have identified opportunities to improve and restore more than 60 hectares of grassland across the Park.

“We surveyed the sites back in summer 2021 to establish their condition,” explains Project Officer Isabel Raval. “We then agreed changes with landowners to increase the number of ‘good’ indicator wild flowers associated with these traditional meadows while reducing those

Locked within some of these unusual rocks is the earliest evidence we have for complex animal life on Earth

that are poor indicators, such as thistles and docks.”

Practises such as cutting and bailing hay and removing the arisings to avoid nutrient build-up or plants being smothered will help to make a difference. Green hay, full of seedheads, has been spread on fields where the hay has been collected so that the seeds can drop and introduce local wildflowers naturally. Longhorn cattle are then used to graze areas later in the season, helping to tip the balance in favour of wild flowers.

Record makers

Another part of our work is to encourage people to record the wildlife they see. A team of staff and volunteers trained in wild flower surveying have spent the summer revisiting the original sites to



Surveys help to establish whether management changes are working.

JANINA HOUJBECKI



Silver-washed fritillary

JIM HICHAM

“The Geopark is noted as being one of the most diverse areas for wildlife across Leicestershire.”

record any changes. Careful analysis of results before and after management changes will show if these techniques have worked. If areas are more species-rich, it will help other landowners to do the same – so we end up with those bigger, better and more joined up areas for wildlife we are after.

“Although the Geopark is noted as being one of the most diverse areas for wildlife across Leicestershire, we are aware that for some this is largely unknown,” adds Isabel. “So we also run regular taster sessions to show people what and how to record in the Geopark.”

The Trust is working closely with a team of dedicated volunteers and charity Butterfly Conservation to record birds and butterflies on nature reserves and private land within the Park. These surveys will show how species are adapting to changes in management, as well as our changing climate, and contribute to our understanding of long-term trends and how to mitigate against them.

Local wildlife recording charity NatureSpot has set up a

‘Wild Place’ on their website where people can see what has been recorded in the area. These records should help others to identify species when visiting sites within the Park. You can find it at naturespot.org.uk/Charnwood_Forest_Regional_Park

Dr Julie Attard is Charnwood Forest Programme Manager: “This is a great way to let people know the types of species that can be found in the Geopark and to encourage more people to go out there and record. This information will be used to help inform future management and to work with landowners to help them manage their land in harmony with nature.”

The Trust is proactively working with other partners and alongside local landowners to achieve its goals. Nature is in recovery with abundant, diverse wildlife and natural processes creating wilder land where people and nature thrive. Getting local communities involved is key to achieving a better understanding which in turn will result in better decision making for the environment.



SARA BOTTERILL

Common spotted-orchid at Coalville Meadows

8 KEY OUTCOMES

- 1 Improve habitat quality in a minimum of 15 grassland sites.
- 2 Support landowners in developing skills to better manage grassland.
- 3 Train volunteers to assess grassland habitat quality.
- 4 Train volunteers and staff in hand-scything.
- 5 Share the importance of grassland habitats through guided walks and talks.
- 6 Train and encourage new volunteers to record wildlife.
- 7 Deliver 48 training sessions to increase the skillset of volunteer recorders.
- 8 Create 10,000 new species records for Charnwood Forest Geopark up to May 2025.

Working together

- National Forest Company
- Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust
- Environment Agency
- British Geological Survey
- Natural England
- Leicestershire County Council
- Charnwood Forest Borough Council
- North West Leicestershire District Council
- Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
- Soar Valley Catchment Partnership
- Bradgate Park Trust
- Leicestershire Promotions
- Active Together
- Charnwood Arts
- Leicestershire Local Access Forum
- Trent Rivers Trust
- Voluntary Action Leicester
- National Farmers Union

Sharp thinking

The Trust is turning to the centuries-old technique of scything to help restore old grassland sites in Charnwood Forest. Uta Hamzaoui helps us get to grips with the sharp end of conservation.

Scything is slow but steady – and ultimately rewarding – work.

JANINA HOLLBECKI

At first glance, scything may appear to be a relic of the past with no place in today's fast-paced world. It's slow and physical work; large fields that can be cut by tractor in just a few hours will take multiple scythers several days, as was the case in years gone by.

Yet it is precisely this slower pace that offers the main benefit for wildlife. When a tractor is used to cut a meadow, an entire habitat disappears in a moment and many insects, reptiles and small mammals may perish in the process. The steady movement of the scythe buys time for animals to escape or be moved to a safe place.

Scything has many other upsides. Scythes are cheap and last a long time. They are easy to maintain, transport and store. They don't need fuel and won't disturb the peace of the countryside and, contrary to what many may think, scythes are safe to use with no protective equipment needed.

This bygone rural skill is ideal for

smallholdings or where a group manages a piece of grassland for conservation but don't have their own machinery. Cutting can be completed in stages over a long period and can be done on uneven ground, on fields with ridge and furrow, in small fields or on wet ground.

Restoring grassland

Scything is now being used by LRWT as part of the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme in a project to help restore old grassland sites. Many of these sites hadn't been managed for some time

and had become dominated by thick, coarse vegetation. The meadows went uncut for reasons such as difficult access for modern machinery, because fields were too small or awkwardly shaped to be cut by machine, or because of wet, soft ground that might leave tractors stuck.

This is where the scything comes in – to continue the management that, often over centuries, would have created these unique, exceptionally wildlife-rich habitats. The sites are often small fields or corners that have survived the typical agricultural improvements inflicted on so many meadows; drainage or the application of artificial fertilisers have led to more productive grasslands but of little ecological value.

The project addresses the importance of saving the last remnants of ancient meadows and the plants and animals that depend on them. The plants can spread out from there but usually need help to get to other sites where suitable habitats are being created or restored.



The scythe can reach areas modern machinery cannot.

JANINA HOLLBECKI

Shieldbug on pale sedge, which thrives in wet grasslands.

UTA HAMZAQULI



Animals such as this common lizard have a chance to move away as the scythe approaches.

CHRIS LAWRENCE



Ragged robin is present in the fields managed by our volunteers.

PAUL LANE



The seeds are collected by hand or green hay is harvested and spread to dry on a new site, where the seeds then drop and germinate to start new populations.

Thrive by the scythe

The plants and animals that live in a meadow are adapted to traditional management techniques. By the time the hay cut arrives from the end of June, most species will have already moved through their lifecycles. Caterpillars and other larvae have developed into butterflies, hoverflies and beetles, while ground-nesting birds will have fledged and are able to move away to other suitable habitat, such as hedgerows.

nutrient build up, which causes vigorous growth of grasses and taller herbs. The cuttings themselves can smother the smaller plants for which the management is carried out in the first place.

Leading edge

Volunteers and staff have been learning how to use a scythe in training sessions organised through the Charnwood Forest grassland project. The sessions ran in late summer and autumn, with the newly acquired skills applied on private land as well as our nature reserves.

The sessions were well attended, even though mowing neglected grassland with tussocky grasses and sedges and

Patches of uncut vegetation may be left as a refuge where plants can continue to flower and set seed, providing food for insects and birds.

Some species escape the cutting by living down at the base of plants or in the soil, like many bumblebee species that build their nests in mouseholes.

Mowing with a scythe means any shrubs or trees can easily be cut around. Patches of uncut vegetation may be left as a refuge where plants can continue to flower and set seed, providing food for insects and birds. Irrespective of the cutting method, leaving uncut margins or patches in the field like this is important.

Raking and removing the cuttings is the hardest part but is every bit as important as the mowing. Left where they fall, the cuttings will lead to a

otherwise entangled vegetation is really hard and slow work! Efforts were quickly rewarded, however. Just one year on from the scything and the delicate grassland species, which were becoming choked by coarser plants, are beginning to flourish among the neater vegetation.

Wild flowers that used to be common in these meadows – such as tormentil, bitter vetch, ragged robin and devil's-bit scabious – are present in the fields that the volunteers now help to manage by scything. These are some of the plants that have declined by so much that they are now classed as 'Near Threatened' in the Vascular Plant Red List for England.

VAUGHN MATTHEWS



Wild flowers such as devil's-bit scabious are being helped through the grassland project – good news for insects such as this hummingbird hawk-moth.



AMY LEWIS

Devil's-bit scabious

Green light

For many reasons scything is the perfect conservation technique. Many people can easily be trained to work in one area at the same time, so long as there is enough distance between them, of course.

The exercise and time spent in good company in an ancient field in beautiful surroundings is good for both physical and mental health. Then there is the knowledge that you are contributing to the conservation of flora and fauna that has been intricately woven into the fabric of the countryside and people for centuries. This surely must be the reason why volunteers keep coming back to the scything sessions despite the sweat and the odd blister!

Reviving the scythe

Scything can prove a valuable tool for improving biodiversity and may even enhance wellbeing.

Catherine Lofthouse shares her experiences of a scything session with LRWT.

Mowing maestro Richard Brown, chairman of the Scythe Association, was on hand to teach us all that he has learned since he was bitten by the blading bug 15 years ago. I will admit that I was sceptical we would need six hours to learn, but I quickly appreciated that it's not just picking up a tool and swinging it about!

First, we needed to assemble the equipment. Modern mowers tend to use a lightweight Austrian scythe, which is a bit like the Ikea flatpack version of the tool. The two grips on the handle (known as the snath) can be adjusted depending on height and arm span so that you get the perfect angle for standing upright while swinging. Posture is key for scything success.

The technique

Once we were ready, Richard led some exercises inspired by tai chi, transferring our weight from one foot to the other and thinking about how to use our whole body to get maximum effect for minimum effort.

I found moving forward in tiny steps, trying to slice through only a couple of centimetres of grass at a time surprisingly difficult. But I can see how, once you



have mastered the arc stroke, scything out in the sunshine, feeling at one with the world and surrounded by others quietly doing the same, this would be a soothing and rewarding activity.

Every few minutes, I stopped to sharpen my steel blade with the whetstone hanging at my hip. It didn't take long to feel tired and sweaty. I was glad we were advised to wear gloves to prevent blisters, loose clothing and a hat for shade.

Any bladed tool can present a danger if used incorrectly. We were taught how to store, carry and work on our scythe to keep safe. And as lovely as it was to be immersed in nature, none of us want to pick up any ticks after standing in long grass all day, so we were warned to keep covered while working and give ourselves a good check over once back home.

Reaping the benefits

Some of my fellow mowing newbies were so enthused by our new skill that they decide to purchase a scythe to take home. One even clubbed together with his neighbours to buy a piece of land to protect it from development and wants to move away from using machinery to mow it. While I may not be investing in my own scythe just yet, I certainly feel evangelical about the benefits to be had from this less invasive approach to meadow management.

Just days later, a swathe of wildflowers near my house was chopped down by machine in less time than it would take me to set up a scythe. Looking at the shorn land, you'd never guess at the long grass and flowers growing there all summer. Maybe one day I'll be able to set about scything it instead and give nature the nurture it needs.



Setting up the scythes. Inset above: Catherine rakes up the cuttings after her scything session.

JANNINA HOLLIBECKI

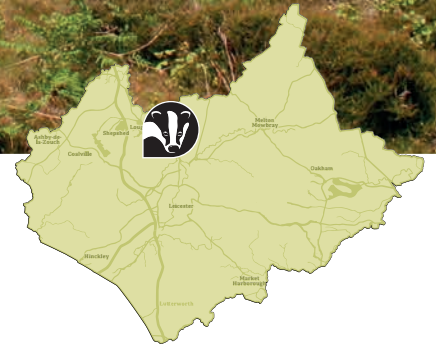


Enjoy an autumn amble around Ulverscroft

Escape the rush of everyday life with some time out in this varied gem of a reserve at the heart of Charnwood Forest. Senior Reserves Officer **Andy Neilson** walks us around Ulverscroft as he talks us through the Trust's ongoing work here.



Heathland at Ulverscroft



Starting at the Fox Covert entrance off Whitcroft's Lane **1**, you are immediately immersed in the ancient Poultney Wood. The area close to the entrance is dominated by silver birch and oak, which are typical trees for the area. This is as good a place as any to look out for woodland birds; woodpeckers, nuthatches and treecreepers are often spotted here. During autumn and winter you may also be rewarded with sightings of siskin and redpoll.

Silver birch is an excellent host to many fungi and the cooler months of autumn offer the best opportunity to marvel at the variety of hoof and bracket fungi that can be seen on the trees in this area. Follow the track downhill, immersing yourself in the increasingly autumnal tones as you go.

At the bottom of the hill the track bends round to the right **2**. Along this track you should see evidence of 'scalloping', where our staff and



Birch polypore

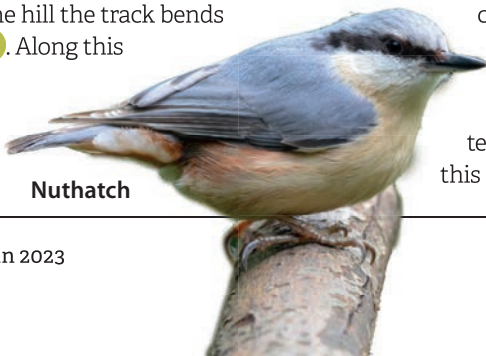
JOV RUSSELL

volunteers have cleared halfmoon-shaped areas of vegetation alongside the path. This enables more light to reach the woodland floor, promoting lush regeneration of a variety of species, while adding more structural diversity to the woodland and a wider range of habitats.

You will notice a number of non-native conifer species and beech trees in this section of the woodland. Our long-term aim is to restore this area to deciduous

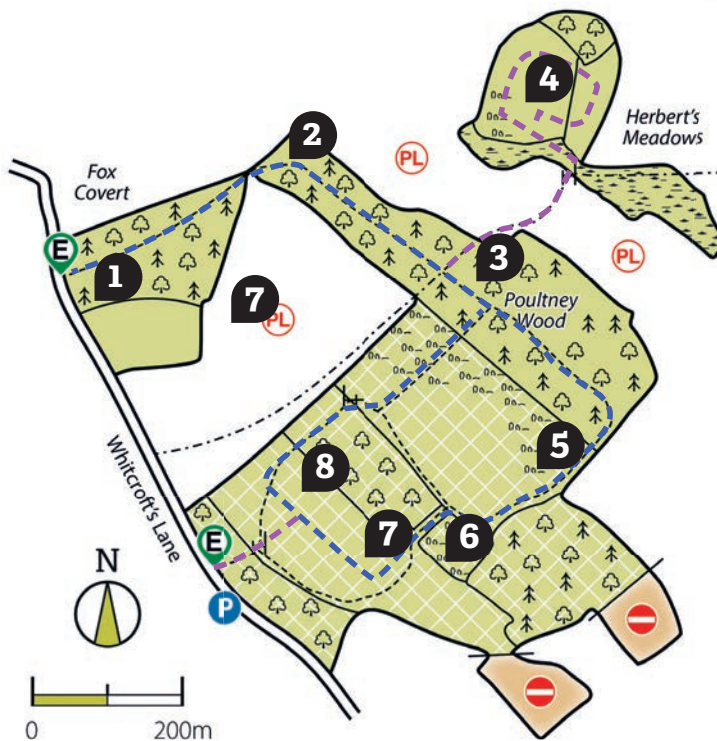
oak woodland, which we will achieve by gradually removing the non-native species and allowing the natural regeneration of the woodland. This area is carpeted with bluebells in the spring, making it well worth a return visit.

On reaching a path crossing this track **3**, you have the option to detour down to the Valley Marshes **4**. The Valley Marshes are home to several small paddocks of wet grassland, as well as Herbert's Meadow, which brims with orchids in early summer. The orchids have died back for now, replaced with a variety of wintering birds, including redwings, fieldfares and flocks of siskin that can often be found feeding in the surrounding alder trees. This quiet corner of the reserve is your best opportunity to chance upon a roe deer feeding in the meadows.



Nuthatch

ADAM JONES



- No entry in this area
- Private land (Stay on footpath)
- Access restricted to WT & NT members
- Open to all visitors
- Public footpath
- Permissive path



Tormentil

VAUGHN MATTHEWS

If you don't fancy the trip down (and back up!) to the Valley Marshes, continue along the track until you go through a gateway and into the heath grassland **5**. The two meadows here have been restored by staff and volunteers over the last few decades. Just 20 years ago this was woodland!

Aerial photos from the 1950s show that this area was originally a hay meadow, but when grazing stopped the trees took over and the area reverted to woodland. Through immense effort the trees were cleared and the rare heath-grassland habitat restored. The evidence of heather, tormentil and heath bedstraw among the grasses is testament to the fact that this restoration is working well.

These fields are brimming with fungi during the autumn and here you can find the magnificent fly agaric. This red toadstool with white spots is unmistakable (see page 10) and sure to brighten up any autumn walk at Ulverscroft.

Carrying on up the hill, you will pass

through compartment ten **6**, another area we are restoring back to grassland. This one is still a work in progress, as evidenced by the felled trees. You might also see some of our longhorn cattle grazing away.

Your walk up the hill is nearly over as you reach the heathland section of the reserve **7**. You will no doubt notice the difference in the habitat up here – it is much rockier, with regular outcrops of granite and plenty of gorse and bracken in attendance too. Look out for heather and



Roe deer

JON HAWKINS / SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY

bilberry plants in the more open areas. These are a sure sign that the scrub removal and grazing regime is working to help us maintain a healthy heathland.

Wintering birds find the heathland to their liking. The raised profile in this location offers a good chance of hearing a raven 'cronking' overhead. Finches and tits can be found feeding among the oaks cloaked in their marvellous coverings of lichen. Skylarks and meadow pipits can often be seen here too.

Head northwest along the ridgeline to reach **8**. From here, you can drop down the hill to the lower Whitcroft Lane entrance and make your way back to the Fox Covert entrance along the road. Alternatively, carry on along the ridge before taking the path north and down the hill. There are some nice patches of bilberry and heather along this path too – far better than walking along the road! On reaching the path intersection **3**, turn left and follow the track back through the woodland to the reserve entrance.

FACTFILE

Located 500m east of Copt Oak in Charnwood Forest. Access is from Whitcroft's Lane, which leaves the B591 Copt Oak to Loughborough road 300m north of the Copt Oak crossroads traffic lights.

Nearest postcode: LE67 9QE

Map ref: SK 489 125

what3words: ///obstruction.form.districts

Parking: Limited parking along Whitcroft's Lane.

Size: 59ha



For further information, please see our Nature Reserve Guide or visit lrwt.org.uk/nature-reserves

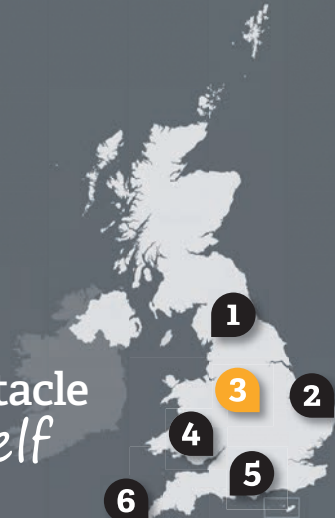
6 places to see

dragonflies & damselflies





See the spectacle for yourself



1 Foulshaw Moss, Cumbria Wildlife Trust

This stunning wetland has been restored for wildlife over recent decades and is now home to many dragonflies and damselflies. You could see emerald damselflies, emperor dragonflies, or even the rare white-faced darter – they were reintroduced in 2010 and are now thriving.

Where: Near Witherslack, LA11 6SN

2 Carlton Marshes, Suffolk Wildlife Trust

This nature reserve is a mosaic of marshes, meadows, pools, and scrub. An impressive 28 species of dragonfly have been recorded here, more than anywhere else in the UK. This includes the Norfolk hawk – a dazzling dragonfly with emerald eyes.

Where: Lowestoft, NR33 8HU

3 Kelham Bridge, LRWT

One of the best places locally to marvel at dragonflies and damselflies, with 16 breeding species, including southern hawk dragonflies, which can still be in flight as late as November. The brown hawk is another early autumn dragonfly that enjoys the mix of river, ponds and reedbeds.

Where: Coalville, LE67 2AN

4 Magor Marsh, Gwent Wildlife Trust

This beautiful area of fenland in the Gwent Levels is ideal for dragonflies and damselflies, including four-spotted chasers and hairy dragonflies. It's also home to banded demoiselles and ruddy darters, who share the waterways with water voles.

Where: Magor, NP26 3DN

5 Higher Hyde Heath, Dorset Wildlife Trust

Exploring the ponds, woodland, and heathland can reward with a variety of species, including downy emeralds and golden-ringed dragonflies – females of which are the longest dragonfly in the UK.

Where: Wareham, BH20 7NY

6 Windmill Farm, Cornwall Wildlife Trust

The ponds of this scenic nature reserve are great for dragonflies and damselflies, including red-veined darters, migrants from continental Europe. Windmill Farm also has a good reputation for attracting rarer migrant visitors, like the lesser emperor.

Where: The Lizard, TR12 7LH

Dragonflies and damselflies are some of our most enchanting insects. They're large, often colourful, and have a fascinating, flickering flight. They dart above the water, starting and stopping like little clockwork toys as they hunt or patrol their territory. Both dragonflies and damselflies belong to an order of insects called Odonata, which means 'toothed jaw' – named for their serrated mandibles. Damselflies are generally slender, with their eyes on either side of the head, never touching. Dragonflies are usually bigger, bulkier and have much larger eyes that normally touch each other.

You can find them on all kinds of wetlands, from garden ponds to canals, chalk streams to bogs – and sometimes far from any water. They're best looked for on still, sunny days from spring to early autumn, when they're warm enough to fly. Here are six of our favourite nature reserves for spotting them...

Did you spot any dragons or damsels?

We'd love to know how your search went.

Please tweet us your best photos! @wildlifetrusts



Banking on a good idea!

BOB COYLE

Sand martins naturally nest in sandy riverbanks and lakesides.

The sand martin is a common summer visitor to our shores, nesting in riverbanks, lakes – and right here at Rutland Water. Species and Recording Officer **Tim Sexton** explains how we provide more nesting opportunities for these incredible migrants and explores the success of our ringing program.

Sand martins are migratory birds and a European species of Conservation Concern. They are the smallest of the European hirundines (martins and swallows) and come to breed in the UK following a 2,000-mile journey from the Sahel, a region to the south of the Sahara where they overwinter. They are often one of the first of the summer visitors to appear on our shores in spring.

This species has suffered a number of major population crashes over the last 50 years, mainly due to droughts in their overwintering sites. Here the UK they are also under threat from habitat loss, where natural nesting sites have been destroyed through development, dredging and bank stabilisation along rivers.

Sand martins nest in colonies ranging in size from just a few dozen pairs to groups of several hundred. In a natural environment they will dig nesting tunnels into sandy riverbanks and along the banks of surrounding lakes using their long, sharp claws. The nest holes are usually between 35cm and a metre in length and are excavated by both the male and female over a period of about two weeks.

Home to roost

The idea to create an artificial nesting bank for sand martins at Rutland Water came in the late 1990s. As the reservoir and nature reserve became more established, a glut of aquatic insects would emerge from the many lagoons in late spring and form clouds above the trees. While this provided plenty of feeding opportunities for hirundines,

MARGARET HOLLAND





The nesting bank at Lagoon 2, Rutland Water and, below right, inside.

TIM SEXTON

40%
of the UK's nest records for sand martins come from Rutland Water!

Along with ringing sand martin chicks we also study returning, previously ringed birds from past years through the Retrapping Adults

for Survival (RAS) project.

Towards the end of the first brood, at the crack of dawn, a team of licensed ringers head out to one of the sand martin banks and run an 18m net along each face of the bank. As the sun comes up, the adult sand martins take flight for their first meal of the day. The ringers carefully extract them from the nets and take them back to the base station where they either record the ring numbers of recaptured birds or ring any new birds.

The RAS project helps us determine adult survival rates, understand how long sand martins live for and see which birds return to Rutland Water in subsequent years. Up to 200 birds can be caught in the session and, based on the results of previous years, around 80% of these are recaptures from chicks born here or adults caught in previous RAS sessions— an incredible recapture rate!

there were few natural nesting opportunities on the site.

The first bank to be built at Rutland Water was on Lagoon 2 in 1999. The hollow concrete block construction, with clay pipes filled with sand leading into a nesting chamber, was designed to simulate the bird's natural nesting habitat. The bank contained 347 nesting chambers. A central corridor with access to each of the nests enabled staff and trained volunteers from the Rutland Water Ringing Group to access the nests and monitor the birds' progress. Chicks were ringed so we could learn more about



TIM SEXTON

bank, in 2014 a second, even bigger bank was built on Lagoon 5. With an additional 485 nesting holes, there were now more than 800 nesting opportunities for sand martins on the reserve.

"...in 2021 we had our best year ever with 524 nest records submitted and 1,648 chicks ringed."

their lifecycle and, indeed, whether they would return in future years.

It took a while for birds to start nesting in any number but by 2008 more than 500 chicks were being ringed every year. Following the success of the Lagoon 2

Ringing the changes

Along with ringing sand martin chicks, in 2011 we started contributing data to the British Trust for Ornithology's Nest Record Scheme. Every week during the breeding season, from the moment the first twig is brought into the bank to the time the last chick fledges, a record of the various stages in the nesting cycle are recorded. This would be impossible in a natural sand martin nesting bank, so the artificial banks at Rutland Water have contributed vital information about the nesting ecology of this species. In fact, around 40% of the UK's nest records for sand martins come from Rutland Water!

The colonies at the two banks have continued to grow in recent years and in 2021 we had our best year ever with 524 nest records submitted and 1,648 chicks ringed.



SEAN BROWNE




Chicks awaiting ringing.

TIM SEXTON

FACTFILE

- Length:** 12cm
- Wingspan:** 28cm
- Weight:** 14g
- Average lifespan:** 2 years
- Brood size:** Up to six eggs per brood. Each pair may have up to three broods in a good year.
- Incubation period:** Up to 14 days
- Fledging:** Chicks leave the nest at 19-24 days old.

 Learn more about sand martins and other birds at: lrwt.org.uk/wildlife-explorer/birds



ARACHNOTOPIA!

Is our area a spider utopia? The so-called Spider Capital of the UK is home to more than half the species found in the country – and we've been busy recording them, as Species and Recording Officer **Tim Sexton** reveals.

There are around 650 species of spider in the UK, most of which are small and secretive. Leicestershire and Rutland have been well recorded over the years and some 350 species have been found in the two counties, including a number of rare and unusual species. In 2020 Leicestershire even hit the headlines when it was dubbed the 'Spider Capital of the UK' with 228 species of spider being recorded within 10km of Leicester city centre alone.

Spiders are in the class of Arachnida, together with harvestmen, mites and ticks. They have piercing mouth parts paired with a potent venom that they use to paralyse their prey. Despite the bad press they often receive, only a dozen of the species found here have fangs strong enough to pierce human skin and, even then, their venom is nothing more than an irritant to us. In any case, spiders are timid creatures that would rather run away than bite us.

Helpful heroes

Love them or hate them, spiders fill a really important niche in the environment by helping to keep a check on the number of insects, which would swell to pest proportions if left uncontrolled. Spiders are also themselves food for animals such as birds, reptiles and small mammals.

Spider silk has many wonderful properties too. Weight for weight it is stronger than steel, more elastic than rubber and it is antimicrobial. It is used by some birds, like long-tailed tits, to make their nests, but also by humans for medical applications and

Did you know?
Weight for weight, spider silk is stronger than steel and more elastic than rubber



Crowded house:
A spider nursery.

ALISON FORWARD

to even make bulletproof armour! Not all spiders use webs to catch their prey, though, and some species, like wolf spiders and jumping spiders, use speed or agility to actively chase their dinner.

Recording spiders

One recent study was commissioned by LRWT to record spiders in the Charnwood Forest area as part of the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme. The five-year project aims to promote the importance of Charnwood Forest and encourage more people living in and visiting the area to become regular wildlife recorders (see page 12).

The landscape of Charnwood Forest includes woodland and characteristic

Local lad: The nationally rare Charnwood Spider.



A.J. CANN

"Our local spiders help to maintain a healthy environment, while making our area an arachnophile's paradise."

Did you know?
Around 350 spider species call Leicestershire and Rutland home

rocky outcrops, thrown up by volcanic activity hundreds of millions of years ago. In fact, the name Charnwood means 'woodland with piles of rock'. The steep, ancient geology and thin soils make arable farming in the area difficult, so much of the area was either grazed or left as woodland. Consequently, it still contains a wealth of nationally and internationally important wildlife, including the nationally rare Charnwood Spider (*Mastigusa macrophthalma*), found in just six sites across Britain!

Many of the historic spider records for the area come from surveys taken between 1962 and 1973 by the Loughborough Naturalists' Club, along with surveys in the early 1990s. LRWT contracted an ecological consultancy to undertake the more recent surveys between 2018 and 2022, which covers six areas: Charnwood Lodge, Ulverscroft Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Lea Meadows, Sandhills Lodge Estate, Bardon Hill SSSI and Rocky Plantation.

The surveys helped discover nearly 180 species of spider, more than 100 of

which were 'money spiders' (*Linyphiidae*). In nearly all cases these very small spiders require microscopic examination to positively identify them. Nine of the total species recorded have a conservation status associated with them, eight of which are nationally scarce and one nationally rare.

Among the rarities, the Charnwood Spider, a target species for the study, was confirmed as still being present at Bardon Hill, its stronghold within the Charnwood Forest. Also recorded were a couple of scarce jumping spiders, including *Neon reticulatus* and *Pseudeuophrys erratica* – a spider which has experienced declines of up to 60% in recent years. The surveys revealed more than just spiders, with hundreds of other species of beetles, true bugs, flies and wasps also recorded.

Our local spiders help to maintain a healthy environment, while making our area an arachnophile's paradise. Through the surveys we have learned more about our eight-legged friends so we can continue to manage land in their favour – and continue to hold the title of Spider Capital.



JON HAWKINS/SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY

Many species, like this jumping spider, are truly tiny.



Whether you have a general interest in wildlife or something a little more specialist, you too can contribute to the project. Submit your wildlife sightings from Charnwood Forest to NatureSpot. Make sure to use the project tag 'Charnwood Forest LPS' when you upload your records. Find out more at naturespot.org.uk

Gourmet Gardening for wildlife

Grow a garden full of food that both you and your wild neighbours can enjoy.

Traditionally, fruit and veg growers view wildlife as something that should be prevented from eating the food we grow for ourselves. We net berries to protect them from birds, remove 'cabbage white' caterpillars from our brassicas. We lay traps for things like earwigs and expose soil grubs so that birds might feast on them before they can do any damage. Some growers haven't got the memo about insect declines and still use harmful bug sprays.

But what if we learned to share, or even deliberately planted crops that could be used by us and wildlife? I realise I may be in the minority here, but one of my favourite things about growing food is sharing it. I'm happy to share my fruit with the birds – my cherry trees produce more than I would know what to do with, and there are enough blackberries, raspberries and tayberries to go around. I laugh at the caterpillars eating my brassicas and I always leave some to flower, along with some 'spare' parsnips and onions, so there's food for pollinators in spring.

If I cut only half of my herbs such as mint, oregano, chives and thyme, I can encourage flowers to grow for bees and butterflies, and if I avoid cutting back the mildewed leaves of my courgettes I provide food for 22-spot ladybirds.

There is a line between providing food for wildlife and having your crop destroyed, and only you can decide where that line sits. For me, there's not really a line. I'm happy for other species to enjoy the food I grow and I go out of my way to provide a little bit more for them. I may have a reduced crop, but I never lose a crop – one of the great things about gardening for wildlife is knowing the ecosystem will take care of itself. This means there's always something for everyone.



Kate Bradbury is passionate about wildlife-friendly gardening and the author of *Wildlife Gardening for Everyone* and *Everything* in association with The Wildlife Trusts.



Get more tips for helping nature at home from lrwt.org.uk/wildlife-gardening



1

**Brassicas**

Vegetables like broccoli and kale will flower after harvesting, providing food for early spring mining bees. Many varieties can be sown or planted out in summer – plant in rich soil and firm well.

2

**Courgettes**

Buy ready-grown plants and plant into rich soil in early summer, and keep well watered. 22-spot ladybirds are very polite, leaving the fruit for you and eating only the leaf mildew.

3

**Oregano**

Plant from spring to autumn in pots or the ground. Leave some unharvested so it flowers for butterflies and bees.

4

**Raspberries**

Buy canes in spring or autumn and plant in rich, moist soil. The blackbirds will leave you some, I promise!

5

**Broad beans**

Avoid removing aphids and you'll provide food not just for them but for the ladybirds, lacewings and hoverfly larvae that eat them. Sow direct in autumn or spring. Stake taller varieties.

6

**Rosemary**

Flowering in spring, rosemary provides nectar and pollen for queen bumblebees. Plant at any time of year in moist but well-drained soil.

7

**Carrots**

Sow direct in pots or the ground from spring to late summer. Leave some to flower for pollinators.

8

**Nasturtiums**

Sow from spring to summer for a crop of fiery leaves and sweet flowers. Leave a crop for 'cabbage white' butterflies to feast on – you can move caterpillars from brassicas onto nasturtium leaves to protect them.



MY WILD LIFE

“We should work to share with wildlife”

Taras Bains, Leicester

Taras Bains is an optimist, determined to help people look after natural habitats. The 23-year-old has already taken more steps to look after wildlife than many will manage in a lifetime! **Wendy Tobitt** caught up with him a few days after he submitted the thesis for his Master's degree in Biology.

Wildlife Watch members will know you from leading sessions at Rutland Water. What did you get up to there?

We spent hours at the Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre at Egleton where there is so much to see on the lagoons and in the meadows. Our group also went to the Volunteer Training Centre and Lyndon Visitor Centre to see the ospreys – always a highlight of the summer to see these magnificent birds of prey.

When the Wildlife Watch sessions closed during the Covid lockdowns I worked with Education Officer Rachel Ibbotson to find innovative ways of engaging young people through online sessions, which I lead from my student room in Oxford and at home in Leicester. It was especially important to give children stuck at home the chance to do something creative and spend time outdoors whenever possible.

What sort of activities did you manage to do?

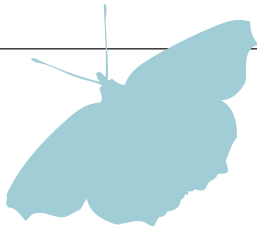
Everything from interactive quizzes to self-led activities. During a mid-session break the children were encouraged to go outside and collect leaves, petals and pebbles they could use for crafts in the next session.

How did your own interested in wildlife begin?

It was my childhood dream to become a zookeeper. I was more interested in animals than nature and read lots of books about mammals. I learnt the alphabet starting with A for Armadillo!

I remember family trips to Gorse Hill City Farm on Anstey Lane and walks in the countryside where I was always on the lookout for animals. Then in my teens I became aware of the threats to animals from human activity. I recognised





the intrinsic value of wildlife and how important it is to preserve that. Like us they have a right to live in their native habitats. We should work to share with wildlife rather than exclude it.

What prompted you to study Biology at Oxford?

I found out about the saiga antelope, which live on the steppes of central Asia. These critically endangered animals are often overlooked because they are not charismatic species like lions. So I completed a project on them for my EPQ A-Level project, which set me on course for the University of Oxford.

In my first year I joined the Oxford University Nature Conservation Society, the first student-led group to bring back nature into the neat and formal college gardens. On a smooth lawn we planted hedgerows and sowed wild flowers to create the OUNCS Biodiversity Garden. We monitored habitats and recorded more pollinators. It took a lot of work to get permission and then do the planting, but it is a significant achievement that will continue with more students coming in to take it on.

This spring the society took part in a woodland BioBlitz. It was a wonderful way to experience a bluebell wood and discover what species of insects, birds and mammals live among the trees and flowers.



What a positive experience!

We need more positives. There's a lot of doom and gloom surrounding the natural world, which is why I have also joined Conservation Optimism, an organisation highlighting conservation success stories from around the world. As blog editor I produce weekly stories of optimism to counter the often negative narrative.

What was the highlight of your degree?

The pandemic removed fieldwork opportunities, so instead I took the Integrated Master's degree and created my own fieldwork with Professor Robert Montgomery's Snare to Wares project, which was set up in Pakwach, Uganda in 2015.

For six weeks I lived in a field camp inside the Murchison Falls National Park, Uganda's largest. Conditions were spartan but I was working alongside people from organisations like Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots. Tasks included tracking lions and monitoring elephants, an amazing experience for someone who spent his childhood dreaming of working with wild animals!

"I was always on the lookout for animals"

Subsistence hunting by people using wire snares was causing serious injuries to wildlife inside the National Park. Project co-founder Dr Tutilo Mudumba realised the young people involved needed to find other ways of earning a living so they could buy necessities, and Snare to Wares was born. The project repurposes wire that would otherwise

be used as traps to create beautiful sculptures in the shape of lions, giraffes and rhinoceros.

My role was to find out how local communities, including these young people, were benefiting from living near the park. Empowering people to create attractive sculptures from material they would have used to trap wild animals creates real benefits for people and wildlife. Murchison Falls is a popular ecotourism destination, so there is a ready-made market for the ornaments. The



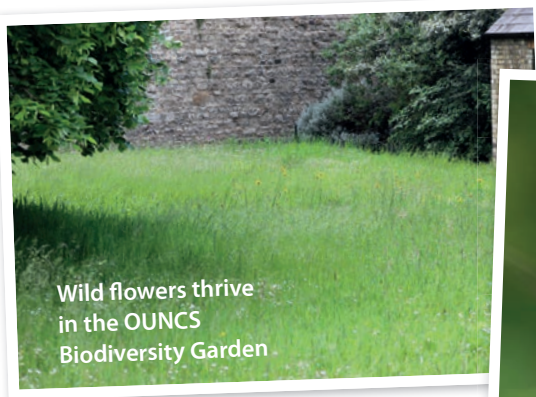
people of Pakwach now take personal pride in what they are creating and recognise this as useful employment.

I enjoyed my time in Uganda and hope to re-join Snare to Wares so I can help more people access alternative livelihoods in ecotourism.

Where will all this optimism go next Taras?

I would like to find ways to influence policy on wildlife conservation and the wider natural environment, possibly with an international organisation.

As the magazine goes to print we are delighted to share the news that Taras was awarded a 2:1 for his degree - a fantastic result! Good luck Taras, from all your friends at LRWT!



Wild flowers thrive in the OUNCS Biodiversity Garden



Common blue butterfly

"I recognised the intrinsic value of wildlife and how important it is to preserve that"

Contact us if you or someone you know could feature in a future issue of *Wild*. We're looking for inspiring stories from people like you! Email info@lrwt.org.uk



Tales from the

WESTERN
WOODS

The British Lichen Society's **April Windle** explores a precious habitat that has long been overlooked by many of us – the British Isles' very own rainforests...



When you hear the word rainforest, your mind probably wanders to exotic lands thousands of miles overseas, to places such as the Amazon or Borneo, but unbeknown to most people, we have our very own rainforests right here on our doorstep.

Along the western seaboard of the British Isles we have a network of internationally important woodlands, elegantly termed Atlantic woodlands. These are typically ancient woods, in clean-air situations that are strongly influenced by the oceanic (wet and mild) to hyper-oceanic (very wet and mild) climate. Some of these woods are remnants of the ancient wildwood that started appearing across the landscape after the last ice-age, making them some of the oldest living ecosystems found in the UK.

This series of woodlands, from western Scotland down and through to the south-west of England, is a spectrum of forested habitats, where Atlantic woodlands can be categorised into temperate rainforests and oceanic woodlands. This wooded landscape is of huge global significance and supports an exceptional diversity of wildlife, most notably the lichens, bryophytes and ferns.

These rainforests are a world unto themselves and have such a mystical and enchanted feel to them. They are dramatic and prehistoric, with twisted and gnarled trees growing amongst the craggy terrain, with rivers that cut through the ancient treescapes and broadleaf canopies locking in humidity as a result of the high rainfall. The age of the forests and the high rainfall has resulted in spectacular habitats which are absolutely teeming with wildlife.



Tumbling kittens (*Hypotrachyna taylorensis*), a lichen of acid, leached bark in high rainfall situations



TUMBLING KITTENS © APRIL WINDLE; TREECREEPER © BEN PORTER; REDSTART © MARK HAMLIN/2020VISION

Lichens are a symbiotic organism composed of a fungus and a photosynthetic partner (algae and/or cyanobacteria)

Lichen the location

What truly defines these rainforests (alongside the rain of course), are the lichens, bryophytes and ferns that make these woodlands so special. When you walk into these woods, the first thing that you notice is every available surface is covered in life. The rocks are carpeted in mosses and the trees cloaked in lichens. Many of the species found here are as rare, if not rarer than the habitat in which they grow. Lichens and bryophytes are fantastic indicators of temperate rainforest, because they have a distinct geographic shift from east to west as a result of the wet and mild climatic conditions. This isn't necessarily witnessed with other groups such as flowering plants, trees, or animals.

Lichens are among the most bewildering lifeforms on the planet. Despite their plant-like appearance, lichens sit within the biological kingdom Fungi, where genetic studies show that fungi are more closely related to humans

than they are to plants. Within our rainforests, lichens can be encountered as mosaics of hieroglyphics on the ancient hazel stems, or as rich, leafy tapestries covering the twisted oak trunks.

This lichen diversity is complemented by a medley of plant life. The rocks and trees are laden with a luxuriance of mosses and liverworts (collectively referred to as bryophytes) and ferns. Bryophytes are non-vascular plants, meaning they lack 'true' roots and a vascular system. The bryophyte diversity in temperate rainforests is claimed to rival that found in the cloud forests of their tropical counterparts.

Lichens and bryophytes are a beautiful and important component of these wooded ecosystems, where species, communities and climatic conditions bridge our British and Irish rainforests with other temperate rainforest habitats across the globe. It is these bespoke bioclimatic features that make our rainforests... rainforests.

A rainforest resurgence

Temperate rainforest and oceanic woodlands more widely are an extraordinary aspect of our British and Irish countryside, and they are right here on our doorstep waiting to be explored. These woodlands are habitats of great conservation value, yet are subject to a variety of threats, ranging from habitat loss and degradation to tree pests and diseases, inappropriate management, and climate change to name a few. Over the years there have been concerted efforts from various individuals and conservation organisations to raise the public profile and ensure the conservation of these globally significant woodlands.

The British Lichen Society (BLS) has a long history of working with charitable and government organisations, using the collective of expertise to generate evidence-bases that underpin management and decision-making. Collecting biological information is at the heart of the Society, with a national lichen database of over two million records and over a thousand survey reports listed on our literature inventory, many offering appropriate management

Restoring Britain's Rainforests

in partnership with Aviva

The Wildlife Trusts care for a network of Atlantic rainforest nature reserves. These beautiful sites, from the Dart Valley in Devon to Pengelli Woods in Pembrokeshire, or Shian Wood near Oban, Scotland, are incredibly important for wildlife, but also for people. We know that the simple enjoyment of wonderful greenspace is more than just fun – it has a medical value, reducing stress and increasing exercise, in turn reducing cost to the NHS. This is an ecosystem service of immense value. Another valuable ecosystem service is carbon, and that's where The Wildlife Trusts' new rainforest programme comes in.

Aviva are on a journey to net zero that they hope to achieve in the 2040s. They are making great strides to reduce their direct emissions, but also want to reduce their indirect emissions within their investment portfolio. They have strong plans but struggle to identify the last part of the journey – the technical solutions are not quite in place. For this, they aim to insure themselves by investing in a nature-based way to suck carbon out of the atmosphere and put it back into nature over the next few decades, counter-balancing any remaining indirect emissions in the 2040s. By donating funds to The Wildlife Trusts to establish new Atlantic rainforest nature reserves in the 2020s, Aviva is investing in both climate solutions and the many other benefits of nature reserves.

This represents a ratchet up of ambition for The Wildlife Trusts as we focus on the intensifying climate and nature emergency before us. We know our marginal soil farmers are going to struggle as agricultural subsidies reduce and new trading relationships allow the import of lamb and beef that is cheaper to produce elsewhere. Planting new rainforests might be part of the answer as we seek a just transition for farming on the western fringe. If meat production is no longer economic, agro-forestry (very low intensity grazing producing conservation grade meat) tied to nature tourism and carbon payments might provide a better prospect for the next generation of farmers.

By working with partners – farmers and other nature conservation bodies, especially Plantlife and the Woodland Trust in this case, we can create a grand alliance to restore the lost rainforests of the west. This April, we announced the first two sites to benefit from this programme. Creg y Cowin on the Isle of Man will see over 70 acres planted with native tree species, with around 20 acres allowed to regenerate naturally.

Manx Wildlife Trust anticipates the return of redstarts and other oakwood birds, whilst the rainforest will also increase water purity for a nearby reservoir and help with flood prevention. At Bryn Ifan in Gwynedd, North Wales Wildlife Trust aims to establish over 100 acres of rainforest, through a mix of sympathetic native planting and natural regeneration.



Temperate rainforests are the perfect habitat for many species, including treecreepers

advice. A significant proportion of this data has been generated in these western woodlands of Britain and Ireland.

In February 2023, The Wildlife Trusts announced their exciting and ambitious 100-year project to restore and expand temperate rainforests along the western seaboard of Britain and Ireland. The BLS would like to thank The Wildlife Trusts for taking lead on this important initiative and looks forward to collaborating with the Trusts in driving forward these important works.



April Windle is a naturalist with a particular interest in lichens, especially those occupying the temperate rainforest habitats of Britain and Ireland. She also chairs the Education & Promotions Committee for the British Lichen Society.

 @aprilwindle  @aprilwindle.nature

Find out more about this special habitat at

 wildlifetrusts.org/rainforest



Events & Activities

September 2023
– January 2024



Get closer to nature and feel inspired on one of our events.

To allow for flexibility, please be aware that our full events programme has moved online. Check there for further details, including how to book, prices, times, and venue. Anyone booked on an event or volunteering activity will be notified of any changes. New events are constantly being added, so check regularly for the latest updates: lrwt.org.uk/events

Local groups

Charnwood Local Group

Indoor meetings: Woodhouse Eaves Village Hall, 50 Main St, Woodhouse Eaves, Loughborough, LE12 8RZ. Admission £3 members, £3.50 non-members, children free. Check website for walk events. Contact Kate Moore on **01509 891005**, katemore123@yahoo.co.uk

Great Bowden Local Group

Indoor meetings: The Village Hall, The Green, Great Bowden, LE16 7EU. Admission £4. Contact Bruce White on **01858 467976**.

Melton Mowbray Local Group

Indoor meetings: United Reformed Church, 2 Chapel St, Melton Mowbray, LE13 1LZ. Admission £1.50 members, £2 non-members. Contact Peter Dawson on **01664 852119**, peter.dawson69@ntlworld.com

North West Local Group

Indoor meetings: Ashby Methodist Church, 5 Burton Road,

Ashby-de-la-Zouch, LE65 2LF. Admission £3. Contact David Maltby on **01530 222934** or Margaret Mabey on **01530 412410**.

Rutland Local Group

Indoor meetings: Volunteer Training Centre, off Oakham Road, Hambleton, LE15 8BP. Admission £2. Attend in person or on Zoom. Contact Becky Howard on **07908 252271**.

Leicestershire & Rutland Badger Group

Meetings held online via Zoom. Contact Dr David Duckett on **0116 259 7231**, info@badgergroup.org.uk

Leicestershire & Rutland Bat Group

Please wear warm clothes and appropriate footwear and bring a torch. Some bat detectors will be available but if you have your own, please bring it. Events may be cancelled in adverse weather. Walks are free to bat group members and £3 for others. Booking essential.

SEPTEMBER

Rutland Water Nature Reserve: Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre

Fri 1 Sep, 9.30am – 12.30pm

Guided Walk with Jeff

Your guide, Jeff Davies, has a wealth of wildlife experience and knowledge, which will make your morning's walk both enjoyable and informative. £10pp (£5 Annual Permit Holder).

Wild Walk at Cossington Meadows

Weds 6 Sep, 8pm

Barn Owl Walk

Chris Hill takes us out at sunset to search for barn owls.

Leicestershire & Rutland Bat Group

Sat 9 Sep, 7pm

Walk at Lyndon Nature Reserve

Search for pipistrelles, Daubenton's, and perhaps noctules. Booking essential through Jenny Harris (07897 123566 or email jennyharris221@gmail.com).

Charnwood Group

Sun 10 Sep, 11am - 4pm

The Brand – Open Grounds

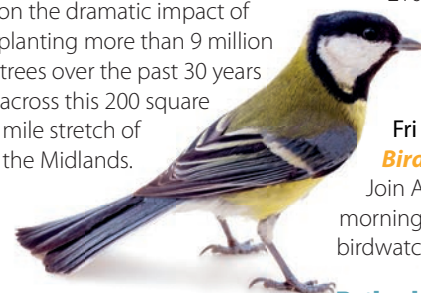
Event in the grounds of The Brand to raise funds for LRWT. Guided walks, wildlife activities and refreshments. Great opportunity to visit this beautiful Charnwood estate. £6 adults, £2 children.

Charnwood Group

Weds 13 Sep, 7.30pm

Biodiversity in the National Forest

Talk by Dr Heather Gilberts of The National Forest Company on the dramatic impact of planting more than 9 million trees over the past 30 years across this 200 square mile stretch of the Midlands.



Rutland Water Nature Reserve: Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre

Fri 15 Sep, 9.30am – 12.30pm

Guided Walk with Jeff

See 1st September for details.

North West Group

Fri 15 Sep, 7.30pm

More Than Meets the Eye

Surveys of the Grace Dieu and Cademan area recorded some 3,400 species. Come and enjoy this feast of goodies, including a splendid book about Grace Dieu which will be on sale for £16.

North West Group

Sat 16 Sep, 1pm

Thringstone Lunch and Walk

Enjoy lunch in the Bull's Head at Thringstone then head out on a wildlife walk around Grace Dieu and its complex of streams, woods and meadows. Or join the walk starting from the pub car park at 2pm.

Rutland Water Nature Reserve: Volunteer Training Centre

Sat 16 and Sun 17 Sep, 9.30am – 4pm

Drystone Walling

This weekend course explores the basic principles of stone wall building and repair and gives you an understanding drystone wall construction. You will then rebuild your own section of wall. £90pp.

Great Bowden Group

Weds 20 Sep, 7.30pm

Identifying Birds by Song

Using sound recordings and mimicry, Nigel Slater teaches us how to recognise common birds from just their song.

Rutland Water Nature Reserve: Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre

Fri 22 Sep, 9.30am – 12.30pm

Terry's Birdwatching Walks

These three-hour walks are led by Terry Mitcham, bird recorder of Rutland Natural History Society. £10pp (£5 Annual Permit Holder).

Wild Walk at Kelham Bridge

Fri 22 Sep, 9.30am

Birdwatching Walk

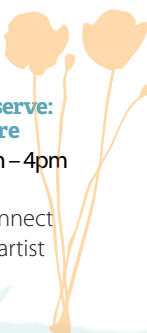
Join Andy Neilson for a morning walk of autumn birdwatching.

Rutland Water Nature Reserve: Volunteer Training Centre

Thurs 28 and Fri 29 Sep, 10am – 4pm

Botanical Art Course

Try your hand at art and connect with nature with botanical artist Dawn Wright. £90pp.



OCTOBER

 **Wild Walk from Rutland Water Volunteer Training Centre**

Sat 7 Oct, 10am

Beginners' Fungi Foray

Join Tim Sexton on UK Fungus Day to discover and learn about the fungi found at Rutland Water. Beginners only.

Melton Mowbray Local Group

Mon 9 Oct, 7.30pm

Talk, topic to be confirmed

Check lrwt.org.uk/local-group-events for details.

Charnwood Group

Weds 11 Oct, 7.30pm

The Origins and Future of Meadows

Uta Hamzaoui on how meadows have become part of the landscape and how the plants and animals that live in them have adapted to their cutting and grazing cycle.

Leicestershire & Rutland Badger Group

Thurs 12 Oct, 7.30pm

The Grasslands of Rutland Water

Senior Reserves Officer Fran Payne explores the different grasslands found on the nature reserve and highlights their management and conservation value.

Rutland Water Nature Reserve: Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre

Fri 13 Oct, 9.30am – 12.30pm

Terry's Birdwatching Walks

See 22 September for details.

Rutland Water Nature Reserve: Volunteer Training Centre

Sat 14 and Sun 15 Oct,

9.30am – 4pm

Drystone Walling

See 16 September for details.

Rutland Group

Mon 16 Oct, 7.30pm

Bats of the World

Jenny Harris of the Leicestershire and Rutland Bat Group talks about bats from around the world.

Great Bowden Group

Weds 18 Oct, 7.30pm

Welland Valley Wildlife

Bruce White talks about some of the wildlife to be found in the Upper Welland Valley – from insects to mammals and everything in-between!

North West Group

Fri 20 Oct, 7.30pm

Charnwood Ringing Group Talk

Discover how bird ringing provides invaluable data on the breeding success and survival of bird populations, as well as bird migration patterns.

North West Group

Sun 22 Oct, 8am

Charnwood Ringing Group Demonstration

Learn how to ring birds at Kelham Bridge nature reserve, post code LE67 2AN. Bring wellies and warm clothes.

NOVEMBER

 **Wild Walk at Cossington Meadows**

Weds 8 Nov, 10am

Winter Wildfowl Walk

Discover the wide variety of wintering wildfowl with Chris Hill. Waterproof footwear and clothing essential!

Charnwood Group

Weds 8 Nov, 7.30pm

Wildlife (and some History) of Peru

This talk illustrates a selection of birds, mammals and insects from one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, and touches on the fascinating history of the peoples who have occupied the land.

Leicestershire & Rutland Badger Group

Thurs 9 Nov, 7.30pm

Wildlife in Leicestershire and Rutland

LRWT Chief Executive Mat Carter looks at the state of nature in our counties both now and in the future and then outlines the Trust's involvement.

Melton Mowbray Local Group

Mon 13 Nov, 7.30pm

Talk, topic to be confirmed

Check lrwt.org.uk/local-group-events for details.

Great Bowden Group

Weds 15 Nov, 7.30pm

80 Years of Farming in the Welland Valley

Phil and Fay Johnson highlight some of the farming changes over the years on their wildlife-friendly farm in Great Easton.

North West Group

Fri 17 Nov, 7.30pm

Wildlife Challenges

Mat Carter, Chief Executive of LRWT, describes the many challenges and the rapidly changing situation facing wildlife today – and how the Trust will respond.

Rutland Water Nature Reserve: Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre

Sat 18 Nov, 9.30am – 4pm

Wildfowl and Wader Day

An opportunity to see many of the wildfowl that winter around Rutland Water. £15pp (£10 Annual Permit Holder).

Rutland Water Nature Reserve: Volunteer Training Centre

Sat 18 and Sun 19 Nov,

9.30am – 4pm

Hedgelaying for Beginners

Learn how to hedge-lay and lay your own section of hedge on this weekend course. £90pp.

Rutland Group

Mon 20 Nov, 7.30pm

My Life in Conservation

Mat Carter, CEO of LRWT, gives a talk on his extensive background in conservation.

Rutland Water Nature Reserve: Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre

Fri 24 Nov, 9.30am – 12.30pm

Terry's Birdwatching Walks

See 22 September for details.

DECEMBER

 **Wild Walk at Cossington Meadows**

Fri 1 Dec, 19.30am

Winter Woodland Walk

Andy Neilson leads a walk to spot seasonal wildlife and tells us how the reserve is managed.

Rutland Water Nature Reserve: Volunteer Training Centre

Sat 2 and Sun 3 Dec,

9.30am – 4pm

Hedgelaying for Beginners

See 18 November for details.

Melton Mowbray Local Group

Mon 11 Dec, 7.30pm

Social evening

Catch up with fellow members. Please bring your wildlife photos.

Rutland Group

Mon 11 Dec, 7.30pm

Citizen Science in Conservation

Talk by Dr Silviu Petrovan of the Department of Zoology at Cambridge University, who spent five years as Conservation Coordinator at Froglife.

Charnwood Group

Weds 13 Dec, 7.30pm

The Beetles Top the Charts

Species and Recording Officer Tim Sexton takes us through some of the incredible beetles discovered during recent surveys at Rutland Water nature reserve.

Rutland Water Nature Reserve: Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre

Fri 15 Dec, 9.30am – 12.30pm

Terry's Birdwatching Walks

See 22 September for details.

North West Group

Fri 15 Dec, 7.30pm

AGM and Talk by Nicholas Watts

Nicholas Watts of Vine House Farm describes how his early farming experiences showed the need for us all to help birds survive in a rapidly changing landscape through additional feeding.

JANUARY

North West Group

Mon 1 Jan, 1pm

New Year Walk at Bagworth Heath

Blow away the Christmas cobwebs starting at Bagworth Heath Woods car park (LE67 1DL) and taking in the old pit area of Bagworth Heath Country Park, Bagworth Church, Centenary Woods and the Royal Tigers Arboretum.

Check online for the full and latest programme of events





Take on the challenge to be a nature guardian!



Run, bake, swim, cycle or game your way to helping us bring nature back.



Download your fundraising pack for ideas and see what we can achieve together!

lrwt.org.uk/fundraise