

went over the magical 1000mm (40in) and ended up at 1091.5mm (43in), or 3ft 7in of rain! The wettest day of the year was 23rd September when 73.5mm fell, just under 3 inches. There were also two other wet spells in the middle of June and July when 45.5 and 42.5mm fell over two 3-day periods. Once it started raining in April there were only two reasonable spells with no rain, 9 days from 20th July and 8 days from 1st Sept. However, Leigh Brook broke its banks only once, on the morning of November 24th after an overnight fall of 38.8mm (1.5in). Looking back over the records, these wetter years did not start until 2000 when over 900mm was recorded. Since then there have been two more, whereas from 1962 to 1999 there were none! 2012 also saw 6 months when over 100mm (4in) fell every month. The last new record to mention is the average monthly rainfall which finished at 91mm, an all-time record compared to 2000, another wet year when the average was 81.5mm.

Ambling/Study Group

from Carol Bradley

We visit places of special wildlife interest in the Malvern area, looking closely at the flora and fauna with the aim of studying and trying to identify anything we can find. We hope the outings will appeal to both experts and non-experts, sharing knowledge, learning and enjoying having a closer and more leisurely look at local wildlife. Do come, everyone is very welcome.

Some dates through this summer: Weds 19th Apr (pm), Thurs 2nd May (am), Fri 24th May (am), Weds 12th June (pm), Sat 29th June (am), Thurs 18th Jul, Mon 5th Aug (pm), Weds 21st Aug (am), Tues 10th Sept (am).

Times and locations will be circulated nearer the dates by e-mail to those on the Malvern Group e-mailing list and on our website. For more info, or if you would like to come and aren't on the list, please contact Carol (01886 884372, mobiles 07896 515823, 07929 091814), or e-mail to malverngroup@live.co.uk.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Indoor Meetings

Indoor meetings are held at 7.30 pm on the first Thursday of the month at Malvern Evangelical Church, 204-208 Pickersleigh Rd, Malvern, WR14 2QX. Adults £2, children free, refreshments available. Non-members of the Trust welcome.

THURS 4th APR: 'Alfrick – a Village and its Insects' by Bill Indge.

THURS 2nd MAY: 'Otters' by Dr. Daniel Allen, Affiliate Member of the IUCN/SSC Otter Specialist Group.

THURS 5th SEPT: 'The Wildlife Garden' by Howard Drury, Horticultural Broadcaster and Writer.

Outdoor Meetings

If you are joining us for the first time – welcome! If you need a lift or more information, please phone: Margaret Jupe on 01684 893808 regarding walks (when donations to the WWT will be appreciated) and Brian Bradford on 01684 565994 regarding coach trips – see enclosed Booking Form for details of these. Always wear suitable clothing and footwear.

MON 8th APR: Meet Garth Lowe at 9.30am for a 2-3 mile walk in and around Crews Hill Wood. Please share cars as

parking is very limited at The Warren (by kind permission of Mr and Mrs Craddock), grid ref. SO735544. Drive half a mile up a steep, narrow lane starting just above and on the opposite side to The Fox and Hounds pub (good fish and chip lunch!).

THURS 9th MAY: Meet Michael Pettigrew at 10am at The Fir Tree Inn, Dunhampstead, near Droitwich, (the pub is by the level crossing), grid ref. SO918600 for a 3 mile walk to Oddingley and back by a different route, skirting Trench Wood. A few stiles. Lunch available at the pub.

WED 22nd MAY: Coach trip to Blashford Lakes. Cost £16. Meet at the Splash at 8am. Visit to these lakes to see early summer wildlife. Many dragonfly and butterfly species. Introductory talk by local wildlife expert followed by free exploration. Booking essential.

SAT 8th JUNE: Meet Tony Hughes at 10am for a late spring walk around the Knapp when there should be many wildflowers including some orchids. Grid ref. SO 751522.

THURS 20th JUNE: Morning coach trip to Symonds Yat and Ladywood Park Wood, possible viewing of peregrine chicks on nest at Yat Rock. Afternoon guided walk through Lady Park Wood, a restricted entry ancient woodland area. Cost £13. Meet at Malvern Splash at 9.00am.

MON 1st JULY: Meet Peter Garner at 10am at the Dingle lay-by on West Malvern Road for a walk looking at trees on the Malvern Hills. Grid Ref. SO 765457.

FRI 12th JULY: Coach trip to the Welsh Botanical Gardens with option for a guided tour. Cost £23/26, includes entry to the gardens. Meet at Malvern Splash at 8.00am.

WED 14th AUG: Coach trip to Shropshire WT Flagship Reserve, Wem Moss. Wetland walking. Morning guided walk and afternoon free exploration of a second nearby reserve area. A pub lunch is available locally to the Wem Moss site. Cost £12. Meet at Malvern Splash at 8.30am.

SUN 18th AUG: Meet at 8pm at the Knapp for a bat walk. Guide from Bat Group to be confirmed. Booking is essential, numbers limited. Grid Ref. SO 751522.

Bluebell Sunday at the Knapp

Sunday 28th April 10.00 am to 5.00 pm

Expect lots of family fun, pig roast, delicious home-made refreshments, live music and wildlife experts on hand for your questions. Set in the orchard, it's an experience you won't find at any other time! Try a guided walk to find out more about what there is to see at one of the Trust's most prestigious flagship reserves.

Adults £3.00, Children £1.00, Families (up to 4 ch) £8.

For details contact Worcestershire Wildlife Trust on 01905 754919 or www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk

Contributions

Please send ideas or contributions for future Newsletters to Brian Dawkins (01684 573562) email db.dawkins@hotmail.co.uk

Committee Contact

Margaret Vernon (01684 565079)



NEWS & VIEWS

from Brian Dawkins

Another new year is upon us and we are all hoping that the weather is a lot better than 2012. In this edition Garth Lowe gives us a very interesting review of rainfall records which he has accumulated over the past **50 years**. They show that last year was by far the wettest he has ever recorded, while 2011 was the driest. 2012 was disastrous for small birds who really struggled to breed, and my resident blue-tits failed to raise any young. We watched the whole sad saga through a camera bird box. In Garth Lowe's garden, all of his seven bird boxes failed also. We all hope for better weather this year.

Fundraising for the Wildlife Trust

Our annual collection this year will again be in the comparative warmth of Morrisons in Malvern on Friday 28th and Saturday 29th June. It would be really good to have our 2-manned hourly rota complete asap. If you can give an hour or so of your time, please contact Dave Cook on (01684 564603), or sign the rota at our indoor meetings.

Hollybed Farm

WWT needs to raise £480,000 by mid-2014, to purchase Hollybed Farm near Castlemorton, to create a new reserve in the historic Malvern Chase. The 42 acre farm consists of 9 meadows and an old orchard. The centre of the farm is an SSSI because of the abundance of wild flowers. For more information and to donate, go to the WWT website, www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk

Bluebell Sunday at the Knapp

28th April 10am - 5pm

Our group will again be 'manning' the Refreshment Stall (selling drinks and cakes), Car Parking and Admissions. Please sign up on our rotas, or ring Margaret Vernon (01684 565079) to book a slot. Your reward - free entrance to the Day!

Other News from the Knapp

The good news is that the Trust has agreed to purchase 7 acres of woodland on the other side of Leigh Brook adjacent to the reserve. This will bring the total area under the Trust's care at the Knapp to 75 acres.

With the departure of Fergus and Tina, the Trust has the opportunity to upgrade the house before a new warden is recruited. A detailed survey has been carried out and a work specification drawn up by Brian Iles (a qualified building surveyor). Work will include dealing with damp problems, replacing windows and some of the plumbing, and general maintenance. The Trust hopes to have all this work completed by the spring. Also, due to the heavy rainfall last year, further bank erosion took place by

the disabled parking bay at the entrance to the reserve. The Trust plans to complete bank stabilisation work by March at the latest. Further work is planned to clear the pond near Daffodil Meadow along with path improvements, required because of the flood damage between the Orchard and Daffodil Meadow.

The Trust is forming a 'Friends of the Knapp' group and is calling for all those interested in maintaining and improving the reserve, through any medium, to contact James Hitchcock on 01905 754919 or email james@worcestershireswildlifetrust.org.

History of Knapp Cottage

from Brian Iles

Knapp was old English dialect (Cnaepp) for land being on or containing a hillock. Most of you will be familiar with Knapp Cottage, the warden's house at the Knapp & Papermill Reserve, and you will have walked past what appears to be an early 19th century brick house on your way into the reserve, probably not knowing that the brick walls conceal a half-timbered cottage dating back at least 300 years. What is now the lounge would once have been the cottage kitchen, which still has its inglenook fireplace and meat hooks on the ceiling beams. The utility room behind the current kitchen still has the slate cold slabs where meat and milk would have been stored. Apparently a former farmer sold meat and milk from the premises through the hatch that still exists in the wall to the roadside. The steep staircase and bedroom floors are constructed of locally made elm boards, once a very common local tree but now sadly virtually extinct. The stone and brick extension, on the road side, was probably added in the early 19th century. The original half-timbered cottage may have been given its brick skin at a similar date. Several half-timbered walls are still visible inside, but the only half-timbering that is visible externally is the roof gable behind the main cottage chimney. It is nice to know that the Trust is not only preserving and promoting flora, fauna and habitat, but is also guardian of an important piece of local social history.

Rainfall in Old Storridge 2012

from Garth Lowe

It is called the (naughty) Jet Stream! Between March and April 2012 it finally shifted after being in the same place over us for around 18 months, giving us a very dry period. It has now stayed in its new position for 9 months and given us the opposite effect, a record wet year. The shift is obvious from the figures. 2011 was a record dry year in my 50 years of recording rainfall, only 471.1mm (18.5in) fell. 2012 has been the record wettest, and the total