

Wem Moss 14th August 2013

Bonni Sinclair

Wem Moss, a raised bog, is a special wildlife habitat that exists in Britain in only tiny fragments. It's special too for its three species of the insectivorous sundews and for the little known Raft Spider that can grow to several inches and hunts its prey walking on water.

A raised bog is formed thus: 12,000 years ago ice and snow covered the land, and glaciers ground their way down from the North. 10,000 years ago the ice melted and left lakes in the low lying areas. Plants growing at the edges of the lake died, sank and accumulated at the bottom turning the lake into a fen. New plants, in particular the mosses *Sphagnum pulchrum* and *S. imbricatum*, died, accumulated and the fen became a bog. More aeons passed, the bog became slightly elevated to form a raised bog - which is very acidic and poor in nutrients.

Here dwell the sundews (*Drosera rotundifolia*, *D. anglica* and *D. intermedia*), Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) and other acid tolerant plants such as Bog-cotton (*Eriophorum* sp.), Bog Rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), Bog Myrtle (*Myrica gale*) and Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*). Our guide from the Shropshire WT led us across the very uneven terrain of surface hummocks, hollows and squishy boggy bits. We found a small Raft Spider of about 2cm and some saw an Adder (baby).

Then on to Wood Lane – a sand and gravel quarry – and what a different learning experience we had. From our seats in a trailer we viewed the modern quarry where the deposits of the retreated glaciers are extracted and transported to the production plant to be scrunched, washed and separated. Problem – big holes: solution – fill 'em up. At the base of the 'hole', construct a shallow lining with clay and plastic membranes, for waterproofing; fill with non-recyclable residual waste, and cap with more clay and restore to agriculture use. The methane gas produced is fed into the Electricity Generating Plant used on site. Visiting the sorting shed, sorry, 'Material Recycling Facility' – what a pong and the dust and the dirt!! – we saw how only 10% of commercial garbage is used as land fill.

We returned to the hides to watch the birds wading or swimming through the various newly created pools. Over 180 species of birds have been recorded there.

Well done The Tudor Griffiths Group for your classic example of complete sustainability.

Ambling/study group outings

Carol Bradley

These slow, informal, half-day 'ambles' around places of special wildlife interest in the Malvern area are for those who would like to study wildlife more closely, improve their identification skills and do some recording. No experience necessary, all are very welcome. Details about the locations are sent out just beforehand to the Malvern Group e-mailing group, or can be obtained by telephoning Carol Bradley (01886 884372).

Mon 2nd Dec, 10 am; Weds 18th Dec, 10 am;

Mon 13th Jan, 10 am; Thurs 6th Feb, 10 am;

Tues 4th Mar, 10 am; Weds 2nd Apr, 2 pm.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Indoor Meetings

Indoor meetings are normally held at 7.30 pm on the first Thursday of the month at the Lyttelton Rooms in Church Street, Great Malvern. Adults £2, children free, refreshments available. Non-members of the Trust welcome. **Please note that the December 5th meeting will be held at Christ Church Hall, Avenue Road.**

Thurs 5th Dec: 'The Natural History of Christmas' by Dr Michael Leach, wildlife author and photographer.

Thurs 2nd Jan: 'Amphibians of Worcestershire and Beyond' by Alan Shepherd.

Thurs 6th Feb: 'South Worcestershire Reserves and Hollybed Farm' by Rob Allen, WWT Reserves Officer.

Thurs 6th March: 'Notable Trees of Malvern' by Peter Garner.

Thurs 3rd April: 'Cloud Forest and Galapagos Islands' by Mike Wilkes, wildlife photographer.

Thurs 1st May: 'The Management of the Malvern Hills' by Steve Bound, director – Malvern Hills Conservators.

Outdoor Meetings

If you are joining us for the first time – welcome! Always wear suitable clothing and footwear. Please phone Brian Bradford on 01684 565994 regarding coach trips – see enclosed Booking Form for details of these.

Sat 1st March: Meet Brian Dawkins at 10 am at the Malvern Hills GeoCentre Cafe on Walwyn Road, WR13 6PL, on the western side of the Wyche cutting, for a 4 mile walk looking for signs of spring. Parking available at the GeoCentre. If you need a lift or more information, please phone Brian on 01684 573562.

Sat 5th April: Depart 7.15 from Malvern Splash to see Great Bustard Project and Hawk Conservancy Trust, Wiltshire. Cost £35 (includes £21 entrance fees): Limit of 16. Supervised morning visit using Land-Rover transport to the hide to observe Great Bustards. Afternoon visit to the Hawk Conservancy Trust. Opportunity to see various birds of prey, plus flying demonstrations and possibly handling experiences. Also observation from hides of Red Kite and Heron feeding. Take packed lunch or use the Hawk CT restaurant.

Tue 20th May: 10 am visit to Hollybed Farm with Rob Allen to look at the flowers and insects of these rich grasslands. Parking at entrance limited to 4 cars, so please share lifts if only from Welland. Main entrance (farm gate and footpath sign) on left, ¼ mile along New Road which leaves B2408 opposite Robin Hood inn. Grid ref: SO 778 382, postcode WR13 6BY.

Sat 21st June: 10 am visit to Carpenter's Farm, Berrow, with Martin Skirrow to look at the wildflower meadows and insects, and also a moth display in the barn. Parking available. Grid ref: SO 778 349.

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

Brian Dawkins

I hope that you have all been able to take full advantage of our exceptional summer which, after a late start, has been great for wildlife, particularly butterflies and wild flowers. What a contrast from last year!

We have had only one indoor meeting at our new venue as I write this, and it went very well. We could not get into the Lyttelton Rooms until 7pm, but with enough helpers we managed to set out chairs and tables in time and there was enough space for everything. We are not sure when we can return to the MEC as the building work has not started yet.

Morrisons Collection

Our efforts in June 2013 were again first class. A full rota of helpers over the two days and a total of £795.21 collected. The Wildlife Trust benefited directly and was well advertised in the process. Thank you to everyone who participated.

Coach and Minibus Trips

Details of our proposed coach and minibus trips up to October can be found on the enclosed booking form. We hope this will help you plan ahead, and also will enable us to have a standard form for reference. If required, further forms are available at our indoor meetings, or can be downloaded from our website. We hope the variety of our walks and trips will provide something for everyone.

Thanks

The group has continued to flourish through the year, with good, well-attended indoor meetings providing a range of interesting and informative topics, a rich variety of outdoor walks and trips, small groups looking at the flora and fauna in our area and doing survey work for the Trust, plus much more. None of this could happen if supporters did not volunteer their time and effort, so, to all of you who have offered help in any capacity – a huge “thank you”. Please consider offering if you have not done so before – none of it need be onerous – just one offer of help, for example, in an indoor meeting per year is tremendously helpful and appreciated. Looking forward to a successful 2014.

Margaret (Chairman)

Bechstein's Bat in Worcestershire

David Lee

Bechstein's Bat is arguably Britain's rarest mammal. Its distribution in the UK is at the extreme northern limit of its range in Europe, and until recently it was thought to be present only in woodlands towards the south coast. However it is

very difficult to detect, since it tends to forage in dense woodland and has a very quiet echo-location call that is almost impossible to pick up on a bat detector.

In 2009 the Bat Conservation Trust rolled out a new survey technique to bat groups in the south of England, whereby bats are attracted into harp traps using recordings of their ultrasonic calls. This proved very successful, and Worcestershire joined the project in 2010. Almost immediately we caught a male Bechstein's bat in Park Wood in West Malvern. This was not too surprising, since we were already aware of a small maternity colony using bat boxes only 2½ miles away in Old Country Wood (near Mathon). However, this was soon followed by two pregnant females in Oakley Wood, just South of Droitwich, and two lactating females and a juvenile in Grafton Wood. In 2011 we extended the survey to other woodlands in the area of the old Forest of Feckenham, and caught Bechstein's bats in Trench and Little Goosehill Woods as well. A total of twelve Bechstein's bats were caught in six woodlands in Worcestershire: the most northerly known British population.

Last year WWT won a grant to carry out radio tracking of Bechstein's bats in Grafton Wood, led by Johnny Birks and Eric Palmer from Gloucestershire, to better inform woodland management. Because of the atrocious weather, most of the bats caught in the first attempts were too light to carry a radio tag, but eventually we managed to catch and tag eight suitable bats between May and August. It was then up to members of the Worcestershire Bat Group and friends to spend sleepless nights ploughing through mud chasing the bats with radio receivers until the batteries in the radio tags ran out.

Tracking the foraging bats has provided a lot of valuable information, revealing some unexpected behaviour not previously published, including foraging and roosting well outside the woodland. In all we managed to locate eleven tree-roosts where we counted out a maximum of fifty bats.

The data is being analysed, and the final report will aim to identify the most important features of roost trees and landscape in and around Grafton Wood. The intentions are to follow up the study with the installation and on-going monitoring of 100 bat boxes, and eventually to carry out a ringing study in order to gather even more knowledge about the behaviour of these interesting animals.

For further info, see Wores Record nos. 30, 32 & 33: www.wbrc.org.uk/worecnd. New members of Wores Bat Group welcome – £15 p.a. – includes two issues of 'Worcestershire Record'.