



Wildlife News from Rushcliffe

South Notts Local Group E-Mail May 2023

Spring is well and truly sprung, in spite of the cold nights, and May is almost here. It is quite possibly the best time to go birdwatching in South Notts as virtually all our breeding species will be on territory, and you may be lucky to pick out a rarity: May is a good month for anything to show up! Trees and hedges will provide a beautiful green background, wildflowers of all kinds and colours will emerge, and the insect world will finally display its incredibly diverse range of shapes, sizes and colours.

Read our guide 'What to look out for in May' by following this [link](#).

GET CLOSER TO NATURE THROUGH ORGANISED EVENTS

Sat 6th May – Wilwell Farm Cutting in Spring.

Join Gordon Dyne to look at the wildflowers at the height of the spring season around the reserve. Maybe some mud. Meet 10 am at the Wilwell car park on the left, just before the ring road bridge on the B680 between Ruddington and Wilford (look out for reserve sign). Post Code for approx. location NG2 7UT, Just Three Words = home, news, fuzzy. For more information contact gordon.dyne@gmail.com

Sun 7th May – Dawn Chorus Walk at Rushcliffe Country Park

5.45 am till 7 pm. Come and hear the early birds with us. Join Staff and Volunteers on a gentle, informal early morning stroll celebrating International Dawn Chorus Day (Friends of Rushcliffe Country Park). The event is free. Just meet at the Visitor Centre.

Sat 13th May – Rushcliffe Wildlife WATCH GROUP

11:00 am - 1:00 pm. Meet at Rushcliffe Country Park Visitor Centre

For young people between 8 and 12 years old who are interested in wildlife-related activities.

Meets monthly, on every second Saturday. Charge £3 per session.

WINTER WILDLIFE TALKS PROGRAMME 2023/2024

We are delighted to announce the line-up for our next Winter Wildlife Talks Programme, which promises to be as diverse, informative and enjoyable as ever.

In October, we travel to the Falkland Islands, with its rugged landscapes and amazing wildlife, including penguins and elephant seals. November finds us nearer home exploring the globally-rare, fascinating and beautiful English chalk streams. December's talk transports us from Ardnamurchan to the Forest of Dean, as we share the joys of some of the best of British wildlife.



The New Year takes us to a small farm in East Durham to hear about rewilding in practice, as regeneration of the natural environment brings plants and animals back to the land. In February we go from the depths of a British winter to Australia, and the incredibly diverse variety of wildlife of Sydney and the Blue Mountains. The Programme ends in March as we delve into the fascinating world of the wide range of honey, bumble and solitary bees found in the UK.

Each talk takes place on the first Thursday of the month, starting at 7pm, and will be available online through Zoom (some may be available as recordings), so book the dates in your diary. Each talk costs £4 per device; subscribe to all six for £20 (both include booking fee).

Full details, including technical requirements and how to book, will be posted shortly on our website at www.southnottswildlife.org.uk; in the meantime, click [here](#) for more details of the talks and speakers.

BABY BIRDS

This is the time of year for baby birds. Sussex Wildlife Trust has produced this simple guide on what to do if you find one.



PEREGRINES

As in 2022, the Nottingham City peregrines have laid 4 eggs, the first on 26th March, the fourth on 2nd April. Last year the first egg hatched on 3rd May so, with any luck, there may well be chicks fairly soon.

Follow progress [here](#).

BARN OWLS

In their State of the UK Barn Owl Population (SOUKBOP) 2022 report, the Barn Owl Trust concludes that 2022 was "A good year for Barn Owls despite the summer drought."

Read all about it [here](#), and don't forget we have an active Barn Owl Group locally, the Rushcliffe Barn Owl Project, whose website can be found [here](#).

BEAUTIFUL BIRDSONG

May is one of the best months to hear birdsong, especially the dawn chorus, as native and summer migrant birds share their songs with us. But, which bird is the best singer?

I guess many people would choose the Nightingale, which has been seen recently at Attenborough, so perhaps it's worth keeping an eye out for one in South Notts. More likely though, you will hear rather than see it, as it is noted for skulking in the undergrowth while singing away; and what a song, or more correctly songs! I have been fortunate enough to hear them in Suffolk: on one occasion, we were treated to four birds singing in a small area of Westleton Heath, and I remember standing transfixed for half an hour, marvelling at their incredible repertoire and volume.



But I suggest two other candidates: the Blackcap, another skulking warbler, also has a wide range of beautiful songs, but perhaps lacks the acoustic fireworks of the Nightingale, while I suggest the glorious melancholic, wistful song of the Blackbird really does take some beating.

What do you think?

WILD FLOWERS

Last month we reported on actions to help protect Collington Common's Cowslips. Staying with Cowslips, Gordon Dyne reports that he "... carried out the annual Cowslip count at Wilwell Farm Cutting on 25th April, and found 1,375 This is slightly down on last year's 1,462, but that could easily be counting error. BUT what is very noticeable is that the numbers in the Cowslip Glade have further diminished by some 50%, the numbers along the trackbed edge have doubled and on the Lower Meadow remain about the same. Such changes of distribution are not uncommon with all sorts of species."

Looks like Wilwell is well worth a visit, as is Rushcliffe Country Park and the Hook at Lady Bay, which also have cowslips in bloom.



Also flowering at Wilwell is Meadow Saxifrage, with its delicate, snow-white, five petalled flowers and long stalked, kidney shaped leaves. A declining species nationally with its stronghold in eastern England, it was once a common species on hay meadows and old grasslands but as these habitats have vanished so has the meadow saxifrage. Our wildflower guru Gordon Dyne believes that Wilwell is one of only two sites in the county where this lovely flower is found, although it can be found in Lathkill and other Derbyshire Dales.



GROW YOUR OWN WILD FLOWER AREA

You don't need a large expanse of land to grow wildflowers - a corner of your lawn, a patch between your beds or on the edge of your allotment can all be converted to wildflower growing, and attract a range of beneficial pollinators.

For some tips click [here](#).

NO MOW MAY

Plantlife are once again running *No Mow May*, their annual campaign calling on all garden owners and green space managers not to mow during May – liberating lawns and providing a space for nature.

To find out more, why this is so important, and how you can participate, click [here](#).

BUTTERFLIES



Spring brings insects that feed on the new-growing trees and plants. Butterflies are some of the more visible, as over-wintering species like Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell and Brimstone are joined by newly-hatched summer butterflies. Most familiar of these are perhaps the 'Whites', the most obvious of which is the Orange-tip. Whilst both sexes share the beautiful mottled underwing pattern, it is just the males that have the eponymous orange tips to their wings, making them more conspicuous, as they fly looking for females.

This difference in appearance between sexes of the same species is known as sexual dimorphism, and quite a few species of our butterflies are dimorphic, sometimes dramatically so: for example, only the male Common Blue is blue, whereas the female is generally brown. There are numerous species of Blues in the UK, but only Holly and Common Blues are found locally.



The Holly Blue is easily identified in early spring, as it emerges well before other blue butterflies. It tends to fly high around bushes and trees, whereas other grassland blues usually stay near ground level. It is the commonest blue found in parks and gardens where it congregates around Holly in spring and Ivy in late summer.

To find out more about this butterfly, click [here](#).

One final piece of butterfly news: A single freshly-emerged Grizzled Skipper was seen on 18 April at Staunton Quarry by Emma Gilbert. This is exciting news because as well as being the first 2023 sighting of this species in the county, it may be the first UK sighting. It is also testimony to all of the hard work by Chris Jackson and his volunteers at the Grizzled Skipper Project.

There have since been more sightings reported, so why not go to this super little oasis of peace near Newark in the next two or three weeks and see one for yourself?



UK BUTTERFLIES SUFFERED IN 2022 HEATWAVE

Bird Guides reports (click [here](#) for the article) that “The heatwave and drought of summer 2022 has had a major negative impact on some UK butterfly species, a study has confirmed.

The latest results from the annual UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme (UKBMS) led by Butterfly Conservation, the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH), British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), show that the extreme weather experienced across much of the UK in the summer of 2022 has taken a significant toll on some butterfly species.

Green-veined White, Small White, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Brimstone – all familiar garden and countryside butterflies – appeared in good or average numbers during the spring and early summer, but numbers in the subsequent generations were greatly reduced following the widespread drought conditions, and scientists fear that there will be similar negative impacts on other butterfly species when they start to emerge in 2023.



The meticulously gathered UKBMS data show that, despite these concerns, 2022 was a good year for some species, including Purple Emperor, Large Blue, Chequered Skipper and Dark Green Fritillary, all of which have been the focus of targeted conservation work over the last few years. However, scientists issued a word of caution, as we have yet to see the result of the drought on these species because the next generation will not emerge until this summer.”

This word of caution is echoed by Trevor Pendleton on the Eakring Birds website (click [here](#)), about Purple Emperor in Sherwood Forest where “a very good flight season for the adults ultimately lead (sic) to a good number of eggs being found, before sun, heat and disaster struck in July!”. He concludes “Although in the end a disastrous season, there is all likelihood that larvae will have survived in sufficient numbers to produce adults in 2023”. So, let’s keep our fingers crossed for the Cotgrave Forest Emperors!

MOTHS AS POLLINATORS

Amid widespread concern about the decline of wild pollinating insects like bees and butterflies, newly-published research from the University of Sussex has revealed that moths are more efficient pollinators at night than day-flying pollinators such as bees, and are particularly vital pollinators for nature.

Studying 10 sites in the South East of England throughout July 2021, the Sussex researchers found that 83% of insect visits to bramble flowers were made during the day. While the moths made fewer visits during the shorter summer nights, notching up only 15% of the visits, they were able to pollinate the flowers more quickly.

As a result, the researchers concluded that moths are more efficient pollinators than day-flying insects such as bees, which are traditionally thought of as ‘hard-working’. While day-flying insects have more time available to transfer pollen, moths were making an important contribution during the short hours of darkness.

To read more, click [here](#).

HORNETS



Lorna Hawes very kindly sent in this image of an insect she found at Shelford earlier this month, asking for help in identification. It’s a beautiful European Hornet (*Vespa crabro*), probably a newly-emerged Queen.

Larger than a Wasp, many people are fearful of them but, in truth, unless you really annoy them, they are gentle and unlikely to sting, and pose no threat to our native wildlife, unlike the Asian Hornet, a non-native species in the UK, hailing from east Asia.

The concern around it is that it is a significant predator of bees. In France, it has consumed large numbers of bees, including the well-known European honey bee and many lesser-known solitary and colonial bee species. Nature conservation organisations, including the RSPB, are concerned about the impacts of Asian hornets on bees, as these pollinating species are an essential component of well-functioning ecosystems.

The Asian hornet is undoubtedly an invasive non-native species in France, and the evidence indicates it would be invasive in the UK too. The DEFRA website reports a total of 23 confirmed sightings since 2016; the British Beekeepers Association website reports that the National Bee Unit has already received 3 credible sighting reports in April 2023, including one in Kent and another near Newcastle.

For more information, and advice on what to do if you do find one, follow this [link](#).

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Upper Saxondale is celebrating its first ever Open Gardens event on Sunday 4th June from 12 am till 5pm in aid of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust.

There will be open gardens and paddocks, and woodland and orchard walks. Their very own beekeeper will be selling his extremely local honey, and there will be plant stalls, afternoon teas and more. And if that is not enough, South Notts Local group will also be there, so come and say 'hello'.

SNLG FACEBOOK PAGE

Just a reminder that the purpose of our FaceBook page is to promote engagement with wildlife and practical nature conservation in Rushcliffe. As part of NWT, SNLG is keen to promote local efforts, so as well as posting our own items of interest we also share relevant FB posts by other local wildlife groups.

We would very much like to hear from people about anything wildlife-related, whether it is things you have seen, identification queries, your own actions for wildlife, or something you are concerned about; send us an email at southnottswildlife@gmail.com. And do feel free to share any of our posts.

CONNECT WITH NATURE

Nottinghamshire in general, and Rushcliffe in particular have many wonderful sites to visit and connect with nature, even in the dark days of winter ...or, perhaps, especially in the dark days of winter!

You can find a full list of NWT reserves [here](#), and a list of sites in Rushcliffe [here](#).



WORK PARTIES

Our local nature reserves rely on volunteers to help maintain them, and organise regular work parties. Planned parties for May are as follows:

Sat 6 th	Wilwell Farm Cutting	
Sun 7 th	Skylarks	
Fri 12 th	Skylarks	
Sat 13 th	Wilford Claypits	Meadow Park
Fri 26 th	Skylarks	
Sat 27 th	Springdale Wood	
Sun 28 th	Sharphill Wood	

Details of times, etc. can be found in the Diary section of our website [here](#), so if you have some spare time and energy please feel free to join in – you will be very welcome!

PLEASE NOTE: All of these dates and details are based on the current entries in the Diary. Could work part organisers please let me have planned dates for 2023, as and when they are available, so I can keep the entries as accurate as possible. Thank you.

And finally...

Don't forget that you can find more news, events and items of interest from SNG, Notts Wildlife Trust and other local Friends of Groups etc. by visiting our website at www.southnottswildlife.org.uk, or following us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SouthNottsWildlifeGroup.

If you want to contact us please email southnottswildlife@gmail.com

Chris Overton

South Notts Local Group

30 April 2023

This message is to local members and supporters in the Rushcliffe area who we have had contact with. SNG will send it out each month highlighting wildlife related local activities and issues. If



Nottinghamshire
Wildlife Trust

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*however **you do not wish to receive this E Mail, just let me know at***

southnottswildlife@gmail.com . If someone wishes to be ON the mailing list please ask them to contact me.