



## **Wildlife News from Rushcliffe June 2023**

*The first month of meteorological Summer, June brings the promise of longer days and – hopefully – sunshine and warmth. Nature is perhaps at its most prolific in this month: birds will be busy raising their young, wild flowers and trees will be at their best, and insects will, in spite of all the pressures on them, be at their most numerous. There should be much to see and enjoy.*

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

### **GET CLOSER TO NATURE THROUGH ORGANISED EVENTS**

#### **Sat 3rd June – Wilwell Farm Cutting in Summer (morning walk).**

Enjoy the wide range of wildflowers in bloom at this time of year including Southern Marsh Orchids, as well as birds and butterflies on site, with Reserve Warden Gordon Dyne. **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 approximate location NG2 7UT, Just Three Words = home, news, fuzzy. Need more info contact [gordon.dyne@gmail.com](mailto:gordon.dyne@gmail.com)

#### **Sat 3rd June – Wilwell Farm Cutting in Summer (afternoon walk).**

Enjoy the wide range of wildflowers in bloom at this time of year including Southern Marsh Orchids, as well as birds and butterflies on site, with Reserve Warden Gordon Dyne. **Meet 2pm** 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 approximate location NG2 7UT, Just Three Words = home, news, fuzzy. Need more info contact [gordon.dyne@gmail.com](mailto:gordon.dyne@gmail.com)

#### **Sun 4th June – Keyworth Meadow Nature Reserve Walk**

Join Neil Pinder for a walk to and around Keyworth Meadow Nature Reserve. Meet at Keyworth burial ground (NG12 5AG), Wysall Lane, 9:30am. Neil Pinder contact number: [07981 928402](tel:07981928402)

#### **Sunday 4th June – Upper Saxondale Open Gardens Event**

Upper Saxondale is celebrating its first ever Open Gardens event in aid of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust. They will have open gardens, paddocks, woodland and orchard walks. Also: their very own beekeeper will be selling his extremely local honey, plant stalls, afternoon teas and Notts Wildlife talking about gardening for wildlife. 12 am till 5pm.

#### **Tue 6th June Bird Song Walk at Cotgrave Country Park**

8.30am Learn about the birds chirping in the bushes with Lee Scudder and the Friends Group. Bring binoculars; ID guides are available. Charge £2. Book your ticket here: <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/the-friends-of-cotgrave...>



**Sat 10th June – 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**

Our next Winter Wildlife Talks Programme starts in October and promises to be as diverse, informative and enjoyable as ever:

- See the incredible wildlife and landscapes of the Falkland Islands and Australia's Blue Mountains.
- Enjoy the best of British wildlife from Ardnamurchan to the Forest of Dean.
- Visit England's chalk streams and delve into the fascinating world of the wide range of honey, bumble and solitary bees found in the UK.
- Hear about rewilding in practice, as regeneration of the natural environment brings plants and animals back to the land.

Each talk will be available online through Zoom (some may be available as recordings). Each talk costs £4 per device; subscribe to all six for £20 (both include booking fee). For dates, full details, including technical requirements and how to book, please follow this [link](#).

**A GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND**

One of the more popular topics on our Face Book page during May has been 'No Mow', and the difference it – and us – can make to wildlife.



Building on the past two successful years of their 'No Mow' approach, Rushcliffe Borough Council has now expanded the number of sites to over 30 locations across Rushcliffe to encourage pollinators, insects, birds and other wildlife. Click [here](#) for more details.

Whist this is truly excellent, and an exemplar to other organisations, Gordon Dyne is encouraging Ruddington's residents to *Support Your Local Bees and Butterflies by making Ruddington a Greener, Grassier Village*. He says:

“Ruddington has a lot of parish green space within the village, but all of it is so regularly mown that there is little opportunity for the wildflowers and insects that are so vital for our long term wellbeing to exist. Whilst there has been some tree planting, which is helpful, areas of longer grass would help make the village a more wildlife friendly place for bees, moths and butterflies. Both

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village schools' grounds have wilder sections, although with St Peters this is a well-established woodland copse.



The Parish Council should follow the excellent precedent set by Rushcliffe Borough Council who since 2021 have been creating a network of No Mow sites on their grassland areas. This now encompasses 30 locations, each with a selected area on which the grass (and wildflowers within it) remains unmown between March and September, allowing more lovely wildlife friendly grassy areas to flourish and, where appropriate, include mown paths.

Even sports fields can participate in this sort of project by leaving grassier margins; indeed the sports field Sheldon Fields in Cropwell Butler is classed as a nature reserve.

In virtually all of Ruddington's green spaces there are areas of various sizes that could be used for No Mow Spring and Summer without impinging on other recreational activities."

Gordon concludes " If you think this matters get in touch with the Parish Council and ask them to implement a similar scheme in the village; you can E Mail them ... WE need to be making a difference NOW and every little helps."

But why just Ruddington? Why not other villages?

Because action can, and does, have results. Collington Common (*right*) by Rushcliffe Arena is the ultimate in Rushcliffe's No Mow area and is unique because the whole site has been "rewilded" since 2008, but with a network of paths. As a result, it now supports 40-50 species of wildflower including Cowslips, Bee Orchids, Greater Burnet and Knapweed. Glorious!



So, perhaps we should get writing.

Interestingly, on the day I wrote this *The Times* carried a report on another 'rewilding' project in one of England's premier tourist spots, Cambridge. Four years ago King's College decided to change one of Cambridge's most iconic views by turning the King's College Chapel lawn into a meadow with a path running through it. A study just published in *Ecological Solutions and Evidence* describes a dramatic and measurable effect on biodiversity, stretching way beyond bees. Dr Cicely Marshall from King's says "It's 25 times the biomass of a standard lawn ... there are more insects which are on average twice as long." Bats are now diverting their night-time flights to feed over the meadow.

But, as well as benefitting nature, such actions help us. In the same edition of *The Times*: Jonathan Tulloch, in Nature Notes, describing a more nature friendly approach to managing St Oswald's



churchyard in Thirsk writes that it “has been allowed to be that greatest of all British rarities, a wooded meadow. The church rests like a boat on a billowing pool of bluebells, buttercups and wild garlic”.

How could we not feel uplifted?

On an individual level, we can all help nature; one way would be to rewild part – or even all – of our gardens. With upwards of 23 million gardens in the UK, that’s a lot of land with potential, and judging by some of the gold medal gardens at this year’s Chelsea Flower Show, bang on trend! Follow this [link](#) to Plantlife’s website for some handy hints.

And yes, we can make a difference. New research published by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) reveals how the UK’s gardens are acting as a safe haven for butterflies; click [here](#) for more details.

Dr Emily Dennis, Senior Ecological Statistician at Butterfly Conservation, says: “This new study suggests that gardens may play a role in supporting populations of some of the UK’s widespread butterfly species, and encourages the positive contribution that adopting wildlife-friendly gardening practices, such as planting suitable nectar plants, can have in helping support common wildlife populations.”

And, finally, don’t forget our talk in January on Rewilding.

## **BIRDS IN DECLINE**

The results of the RSPB’s Big Garden Birdwatch for 2023 are in, and the winner is the House Sparrow, for the 20<sup>th</sup> year running. I don’t know what House Sparrow numbers are like where you live, but in my corner of Ruddington they are extremely rare, unlike when growing up in Lincolnshire where they seemed to be everywhere. This relates well to the widespread decline of House Sparrow in the UK countryside, described by the RSPB as "startling", with an estimated 22 million sparrows lost since the mid-1960s. Although some 1.5 million individuals were counted during 2023’s Big Garden Birdwatch, this figure is 60% down on the first survey 44 years ago.



For a more comprehensive review of the Big Garden Birdwatch 2023 by Bird Guides, click [here](#).

Butterfly Conservation reports that a new study, published by the science journal PNAS, has found that increased use of pesticides and fertiliser is driving bird population declines across the UK and Europe, further evidence of the harm pesticides are having on our natural environment, particularly neonicotinoids.



For more details, and the opportunity to sign a petition on the use of neonicotinoids, follow this [link](#).

### **NOT ALL ORCHIDS ARE EQUAL**

Gordon Dyne reports a recent count of 510 Green-winged Orchid flower spikes at Wilwell Farm Cutting, and that the first Southern Marsh Orchids are starting to show. He also reports finding a Common Twayblade (which has, happily, started reappearing at Wilwell in recent years, following 'The Great Flood').



We usually think of orchids as beautiful, colourful, sometimes exotic, extravagantly-flowered plants. The Common Twayblade (*right*) is really none of those things, and could be quite easily missed. However, it is an orchid, and one of the most common and widespread in Britain and Ireland. So, while it may not be as attractive some of the other species found in Rushcliffe, including Bee, (*left*) Common Spotted, Pyramidal and Southern Marsh, it is still worthy of attention, albeit much less obvious.



### **BANDED BEAUTIES**

A post on our Face Book page earlier this month suggested keeping an eye out for Banded Demoiselles as they emerge for the summer, which got me thinking. Perhaps it's a consequence of advancing years, but every year about this time, when I see for the first time that year some insects, I remain surprised by just how small they are - my memory says they should be bigger! – and so easily missed. This phenomenon is particularly apparent with damselflies, especially newly-emerged (or teneral) ones which have yet to gain their full colour; there is one exception, and that is the Demoiselles.

We only have Banded Demoiselles in Rushcliffe, and the shiny dark green body and iridescent wings make it difficult to miss.





Watch when males (*left*) gather together waiting for a female (*right*). Stand on the river bank at Gunthorpe or Attenborough on a sunny summer day, and you are likely to be rewarded with groups of males perching in the waterside vegetation, suddenly dispersing in pursuit of a golden-winged female flying by, usually trying to avoid the males' advances.

## **THE ORIGIN OF BUTTERFLIES**

Rhys Blakely in *The Times*, 15 May 2023 reported on newly-published research that shows "butterflies are only moths that started going out in daylight", which allowed them to feed on a greater variety of flowers, evolving to become butterflies. The research shows that:

- Appearing first in North and Central America during the age of the dinosaurs, about 101 million years ago, they reached Britain about 15-30 million years ago.
- Once butterflies had become established they quickly diversified, in parallel with the plants on which they fed. By the time the dinosaurs were wiped out 66 million years ago, nearly all modern butterfly families had appeared.
- Bean plants were identified as the original source of food for the caterpillars of almost every family of butterflies, including the ancestor of all butterflies.

The work involved researchers from dozens of countries, who built the largest family tree of butterfly species yet created. This involved them analysing DNA from nearly 2,300 types of butterfly, almost 2,000 of which were newly sequenced for the study. The scientists also analysed 11 rare butterfly fossils.

The results are published in the journal *Nature Ecology and Evolution*, and can be found [here](#).

The Garden Butterfly Survey is a research project run by Butterfly Conservation. The results help them understand how best to help butterflies in our gardens. All you need to do is log your butterfly sightings at least once a month. Sign up [here](#)

## **HERE COME THE BUMBLES**

By now, most bumblebee queens will have emerged from hibernation, found a nest and started to produce offspring. The first batch consists entirely of workers, smaller females, which carry out work inside and outside the nest. The queen remains inside the nest, laying more eggs for the next batch of workers. Towards the end of a nest, males are produced and leave. They do not collect pollen, but spend their time feeding on nectar and trying to mate with queens from other nests.

There are 24 resident species of bumblebee in the UK, and Bumblebee Conservation has produced an app to help in identification, available [here](#).

And don't forget, you can find out much more about bumblebees in our March 2024 talk.



## **WHAT DO HEDGEHOGS REALLY EAT?**

People love hedgehogs, but do you know what's in a hedgehog's diet? Here's Dr Richard Fox, Head of Science at Butterfly Conservation: "Contrary to the popular belief that hedgehogs mainly eat slugs, studies repeatedly show that caterpillars, beetles and earthworms are much more important. In one study of 137 hedgehogs in England, 74% had beetles in their diet, 49% had moth and butterfly caterpillars in their diet and 34% had earthworms – only 23% had recently eaten slugs. The difference is even more stark when the calorie intake of hedgehogs is considered. Slugs and snails typically provide less than 5% of a hedgehog's energy requirements, while caterpillars and beetles can each make up one third or more.

Another study, carried out on a golf course near Heathrow airport, revealed dramatic changes in hedgehog diets through the year. While beetles and earthworms were fairly consistent in the diet through the year, caterpillars were extremely important prey items in late summer and autumn. At this time of year, which is important for hedgehogs as they build up their fat reserves for hibernation, around 50% of a hedgehog's diet (in terms of energy intake) can be caterpillars. One single hedgehog dropping in this study contained the remains of 56 individual caterpillars, most likely Noctuid moths."

The British Hedgehog Preservation Society reminds us that if you spot a hedgehog out in the daytime, it often means something is wrong but if you see a busy, healthy 'hog you should leave them to go about their business in peace .

Visit their website ([here](#)) for more information on how to help hedgehogs.

## **MORE TREES AT COTGRAVE COUNTRY PARK**

With the help of the 9th West Bridgford (Holy Spirit) Cub pack and their leaders, supported by the County Council's park manager, the Friends Of Cotgrave Country Park have planted 107 trees, making a lasting investment in the park in support of conservation and wildlife.

The Friends of Cotgrave Country park aim to develop interest, knowledge and involvement by young people in the park to ensure green spaces are looked after in the future.

Keep an eye out on their Facebook page ([here](#)) for their next guided walks and Family Fun day coming soon, where everyone is welcome!

## **ACHIEVING A WILDER NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**

Over the next few years Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust are running a major project across the county promoting wider engagement with wildlife. This is part of a long term ideal to achieve a significant growth in action for wildlife across the community. The belief is that if the nature conservation movement can develop a sufficient groundswell of activity and opinion in favour of wildlife local and national governments will also pay far more heed to the issue. It is a major ask but NWT are committing three staff members across the county to get out into the community supporting and advising existing groups, as well as helping new groups and individuals to find their feet with direct advice, signposting etc. If you would like to know more please follow this [link](#)

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### **30 DAYS WILD**

30 Days Wild is The Wildlife Trusts' annual national nature challenge where the nation is asked to do one 'wild' thing a day every day throughout June. Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust is running it locally.

Your daily wild activities can be anything you like - you might be having breakfast with the birds on Monday, feeling the grass between your toes on Tuesday, and watching wildlife webcams on Wednesday. There's no set structure, so you can take part in a way that suits you. Alongside benefiting your local wildlife, taking part in 30 Days Wild is scientifically proven to make you feel happier, healthier, and more connected to nature.

Anyone can take part in 30 Days Wild. There are resources for schools, care homes and businesses. Follow this [link](#) to sign up today and receive a FREE pack in the post, including lots of inspiration for activities.

### **NATURE CONSERVATION IN RUSHCLIFFE**

Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy Implementation Group (RNCSIG) has published its Annual Report for 2022/23. RNCSIG was originally set up in 2003 to help promote the Rushcliffe Nature Conservation Strategy. Follow this [link](#) for the Annual Report.

### **CONNECTING 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 June are as follows:

Sat 3rd	Wilwell Farm Cutting	
Sun 4th	Skylarks	
Fri 9th	Skylarks	
Sat 10th	Wilford Claypits	Meadow Park
Fri 23rd	Skylarks	
Sun 25th	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](http://www.southnottswildlife.org.uk), or following us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/SouthNottsWildlifeGroup](https://www.facebook.com/SouthNottsWildlifeGroup) .

If you want to contact us please email [southnottswildlife@gmail.com](mailto:southnottswildlife@gmail.com)

Chris Overton  
South Notts Local Group  
27<sup>th</sup> May 2023

*First image by Rushcliffe Borough Council Collington Common image Gordon Dyne All other images © Chris Overton*