



Wildlife News from Rushcliffe November 2023

November: shorter days, bare trees, no flowers, no insects and little birdsong ... but that's enough of the downsides, as we welcome many thousands of winter visitors to our fields, trees, gardens and waterways.

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

GET CLOSER TO NATURE THROUGH ORGANISED EVENTS

Sat 11th November – DaNES Insect Show 2023

Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomological Society's Insect Show 2023.

A celebration of Insects taking place at Nottingham Trent University's Brackenhurst Campus, from 10:30 to 4:00 pm.

To download a poster showing more details of what is always a fascinating event, click [here](#).

Sat 11th November – 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

Thursday November 9th: Our English Chalk Streams: Rare and beautiful but threatened - Doug Kennedy



England's chalk downs and wolds are a globally rare landscape over which flow around 60 chalk streams: there are only 210 chalk streams World-wide so these represent a priceless English phenomenon. With industrialisation and the burgeoning of housing developments they have come under threat and many have been altered beyond recognition. Those that survive are fascinating and beautiful; this talk seeks to reveal this and explore how they can be protected.

Doug is a photographer, ecologist and wildlife campaigner who has produced seven books on English landscapes and natural history. With an MSc in environmental studies, he has been a lifelong campaigner for nature, and initiated several successful campaigns including the Chalk Stream Action Group and Save the River Thames.



The talk will be available online through Zoom, and costs £4 per device (including booking fee). To book, please follow this [link](#) (which also provides details of technical requirements and the remaining talks in the Programme).

KEEPING IT WILD

In our September Wildlife News we introduced *Keeping it Wild*, NWT's Youth Team, a group of like-minded 13 – 25 year olds who are passionate about nature, conservation and adventure. South Notts Local Group has been happy to provide them with financial support and, as we reported previously, are encouraging them to tell us about their work for wildlife. Here is the latest article written by Etienne:

A Small mammal spectacular with Keeping it Wild

Hi, my name is Etienne. I am 14 and one of the newest members of Keeping It Wild, I joined in August. So far, my favourite thing I have gotten to do has been small mammal trapping at Gresham Marsh. This was over 2 days and we got to learn about various small mammals that you might find at a local wildlife site like mice, shrews, and voles, how to survey them and then identify which species are which.

On the first day, we showed up in the evening and working with Michael and Lorna who are experts in all things mammal related from Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, we checked traps that they had set earlier that day, to give everyone a chance to hopefully see some of the small mammals. Some of the traps had been triggered and we were lucky enough to see some up close.



We had to wear masks whilst working with the small mammals as there is the potential for us to give them viruses like Covid-19. The images above show what a Longworth trap looks like, which was used in the survey.

We then recorded the mammals, number, species, and sex if possible that had been caught and, in the process, learned more about the animal's behaviour and habitat from Michael and Lorna as well as the importance of welfare and how to set them free. Next, we released them from where we found the traps and made sure that the traps had everything in them (e.g., food and bedding).



The following morning, we returned to Gresham Marsh and continued with where we left off yesterday. However, as the traps were left overnight, more of them had been set off.



Much like the previous day, we recorded mammals that we had caught and since we had learnt how to properly handle them yesterday, we were entrusted with moving the mammals into the container to be examined, which was extremely exciting. Firstly, we had to put on gloves and a mask to avoid spreading disease. Then we would place the trap into a bag and open it. From there we would hold the mammal and move it into the box where we would document what it is before releasing it, **making sure the welfare of the animal was always a priority**



All the species recording we got from this survey is going to help Gresham Marsh, as it is trying to be designated as a Local Nature Reserve, which will help protect the site in the future.

Overall, I am really enjoying being part of Keeping It Wild, especially the small mammal trapping and the meadow mow we did at our Nature Reserve Woodthorpe Meadow in August.

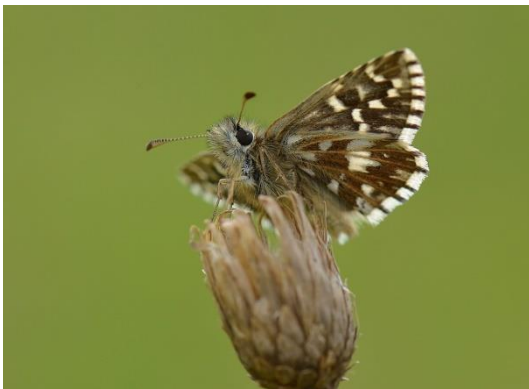
BUTTERFLIES

Last month I included some thoughts, based entirely on anecdotal evidence, on this year's butterfly numbers locally: smaller numbers of most species, with the picture improved late in the season by Peacocks and unusually high numbers of Red Admirals. Simon Williams has carried out a regular Butterfly Transect at Wilwell Farm Cutting each year since 2020, with the following results:



Year	Number	Species
2020	329	19
2021	374	19
2022	501	20
2023	399	20

Commenting on the data, Gordon the Warden confirmed this year's smaller number was consistent with his anecdotal evidence, and that "over the years numbers are less from back in the day, certainly the mid-summer flight of the Browns is less prolific than it used to be." Whilst Small Copper numbers had increased (albeit at a small number), neither Small Tortoiseshell nor Silver-washed Fritillary were seen this year. It is to be hoped that the Silver-washed Fritillary's presence, seen at Wilwell only in the last two years, was not a passing one.



The Grizzled Skipper (*left*) is a nationally important butterfly. Small and not always easy to see – but not forgotten once seen – it can be found at a number of sites in Rushcliffe, where it is at the very northern limit of its range in England. Its continuing presence bears testimony to the work of Chris Jackson - and volunteers - at Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group (BAG), who is asking for volunteers to join working parties in the coming months to help ensure the Skipper's continued, and hopefully expanded, presence.

Many of the sites where the Grizzled Skipper occurs require regular maintenance to keep them in suitable condition, which includes scrub clearance work to maintain open habitat and help create corridors to link existing open habitats, and creation of bare earth patches to increase the availability of suitable egg-laying habitat.

Dates and times for the work parties can be found in our website diary [here](#). For more information, please contact Chris Jackson at the Notts BAG on 0115 993 2588 or email chris.jackson@nottsc.gov.uk.

In the July edition of Wildlife News we reported a flurry of media interest about the appearance of Black-veined White butterflies at a London reservoir. It was subsequently confirmed the sightings resulted from an unofficial release, which it now transpires followed previous isolated discoveries of three critically endangered species of butterfly at the same site: the marsh fritillary, the Glanville fritillary and the Duke of Burgundy, all three from similar releases. Butterfly Conservation said that "these sightings are the result of an unofficial release", adding that it is "supportive of reintroductions when they are based on sound research".

This week, The Times reported that the butterfly could make a comeback a century after it was last seen in Britain, as part of a rewilding project – at the Knepp Estate - in Sussex.



The black-veined white (*left*) disappeared from its strongholds in southern England and south Wales in the mid-1920. Climatic factors are thought to have played a part in its demise, but rising average temperatures now favour its return. (*Image:Wikipedia*)

A project called Weald to Waves has devised a three-year programme to breed and release the butterfly along a 100-mile “wildlife corridor” connecting Ashdown Forest in East Sussex to the coastline. With sufficient suitable habitat to the immediate south and southeast of Knepp, the team have identified several candidate release sites.

Butterfly breeders with experience of previous official reintroductions have been lined up to breed black-veined whites in captivity, but the project is still looking to secure funding for a member of staff to manage the scheme. Another requirement is a source of eggs or larvae that can be proven free of pathogens or parasites, and from a part of Europe where the species’ flying season is in synchrony with that likely to be seen in the UK.

Once it is cleared for release and breeding started, the plan is then to release adult butterflies in two or three locations for three years running, then assess its natural spread.

BEWICK’S SWANS

The smallest of the three swan species seen in the UK, Bewick’s Swan is a very occasional winter visitor to Rushcliffe, often in company with the small groups of Whooper Swans that sometimes gather in fields close to the Trent.



For many years, we made an annual pilgrimage to WWT Slimbridge, primarily to see the overwintering Bewick’s Swans. Come three o’clock, after a morning looking at the collection birds, followed by a circuit of the hides to see massed ranks of waders and geese, it was off to the Peng observatory building to grab a front row seat for the forthcoming feeding of the birds. It was wonderful to see the swans fly in, in family groups, from the fields where they had spent the day grazing; the effect on a crisp sunlit day with a

low sun was especially magical. We watched as they dropped in, often quite literally, sometimes landing on densely-packed ducks, joining them in anticipation of the soon-to-appear food. (*Image: Wikipedia*)

In recent years the spectacle has become much diminished. I can remember days when well over 300 swans were there, but in the last few years numbers have fallen significantly, closer to 100 birds.



This decline has been confirmed by recently-published research from the Netherlands, and it's a mix of good and bad news. The bad news, for us, is that numbers in the UK are down, and likely to remain so, but the good news for the swans is that, rather than suffering declining numbers, they have simply moved north. A changing climate, with its milder winters, means that they do not have to fly so far south-west from their breeding grounds in northern Russia to find comfortable winter quarters, with most of the population now overwintering in northern Germany.

The researchers concluded that adults tended to stick to their old habits, using the same nest sites and overwintering grounds, and it is juvenile birds that are migrating shorter distances, gradually causing a territorial shift of the entire species. This could mean, presumably, that in coming years chances of seeing them locally will, sadly, reduce.

A more detailed summary of the research can [here](#) on the phys.org website.

WHATEVER NEXT?

A piece in this week's *Times* suggests a possible, more positive consequence of a changing climate. In his *Weather Eye* column, Paul Simons reports on the growth and spread of "... grasshoppers and crickets basking in balmy weather in fields and meadows", "...yet further evidence of our warming climate", with a number of 'new' species migrating from mainland Europe to the south coast, from where they are spreading northwards. They include great green bush-, tree-, sickle-bearing bush-, Roesel's bush- and southern oak bush-crickets, and large cone-heads.

Peter Sutton from the Orthoptera survey added that "One of the most extraordinary records has been for the praying mantis, a spectacular and large European mantis, and there has now been clear evidence of it breeding in the Oxfordshire area."

So, in the coming springs and summers, keep eyes peeled, and ears pricked!

LICHENS AND RAIN FORESTS



As autumn turns to winter, so the trees and hedgerows lose their leaves and most of their colour, apart from berries, and wild flowers have gone to rest up for next year. But, hiding in plain sight, are some of our most enigmatic plants which, on usually necessary closer inspection, reveal fascinating colours and shapes: lichens. As Charlotte Owen, Sussex Wildlife Trust's WildCall Officer

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Follow us on Facebook at [Southnottswildlife](https://www.facebook.com/Southnottswildlife)

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writes: “ It’s an everyday sight that can often go unnoticed but the more you look, the more of it you see – lichen growing on gravestones, bristling along branches, clinging to fence posts, encrusting rocks and daubed across rooftops.” Click [here](#) to read the remainder of her article.

But, according to BBC News, it is rare lichens clinging to trees that are of particular interest to “conservationists who are racing to protect rare flora and fauna clinging to survival in the UK's last temperate rainforests.” These lush, humid woodlands, mostly along the UK's western coasts, are home to weird and wonderful lichens not found anywhere else on Earth. The historic decline of rainforests has put some globally important plants and fungi at risk of extinction. One rare lichen is only thought to exist in a single wood in Somerset.

The full article can be found [here](#).

SPIDERS UNSTUCK



As well as being the “season of mists and mellow fruitfulness”, autumn means spiders’ webs, often made more visible by water droplets left by the mists. You can often watch insects straying onto a web, becoming stuck, and being quickly wrapped in silk by the resident spider, for future consumption (a packed lunch?).

But why don’t spiders get stuck in the web as well? To find the answer – and it’s yet another marvel of nature – read Rachel Funnell’s explanation [here](#).

SKYLARKS – A ROOM WITH A VIEW



The latest addition to NWT’s reserve at Skylarks has just opened – a beautiful new hide overlooking the wetlands of Blotts Pit. The unique structure, made from natural materials found across our reserves, is appropriately named 'The Herebeorg' from Old English which translates into 'shelter' or 'refuge'.

To read more about the hide, and the journey from idea to reality, click [here](#).

HELPING WILDLIFE THROUGH THE WINTER

Bumblebee Conservation Trust reminds us of the need to look after our hibernating bumblebees. Bumblebees aren’t fantastic diggers, which is why they sometimes nest in spaces where another animal has already done the work, like an old rodent hole. They can move a few centimetres of soil to create this kind of hibernaculum. Bumblebee queens hibernate for 6-9 months of the year, and after finding a cosy space in mid to late summer, they won’t emerge again until the following



spring. So, if you accidentally disturb a hibernating bumblebee, don't panic! Gently cover her back over with the same material that she had dug into and leave her be.

For more information on helping protect bumblebees through the winter, click [here](#).

And, courtesy of the delightful website *thefutureismown.com*, here are a couple of timely tips about helping protect hedgehogs:

HELPING HEDGEHOGS

(Wintertime)

Not all hedgehogs go into hibernation, and those that do may hibernate early or late in the year for various lengths of time. Some even wake up for a snack then go back to sleep - so it's helpful to continue to provide food and water every night for any hedgehogs that keep foraging throughout winter.



HELPING HEDGEHOGS

(Bonfires)

Just before lighting:
Always check bonfires for hedgehogs, ideally moving the entire pile, and then only light from one side. It's also a good idea to look for wildlife under garden incinerators and fire pits.



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 November are as follows:

- | | | |
|----------|---|------------------|
| Sat 4th | Wilwell Farm Cutting | |
| Sun 5th | Skylarks | The Hook Reserve |
| Fri 10th | Skylarks | |
| Sat 11th | Wilford Claypit | Meadow Park |
| Sun 19th | Grizzled Skipper Granby disused railway | |
| Fri 24th | Skylarks | |



Sat 25th Springdale Wood
Sun 26th Sharphill Wood
Tue 28th Grizzled Skipper Saxondale disused railway

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

Follow 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 27th October 2023