



Wildlife News from Rushcliffe January 2024

Here comes a new year, with hopefully much to see and enjoy. Although the countryside continues to lack the greenery of spring and summer, days will lengthen, albeit slowly at first, allowing more time to see our winter birds – both residents and visitors who should all be here now.

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

GET CLOSER TO NATURE THROUGH ORGANISED EVENTS

Sat 13th January – 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 January 4th: (re)Wilding - Jenny Conor



Join us to hear what rewilding means at Dalton Moor Farm, a small farm in East Durham, as Jenny tells us of her experiences over the last ten or so years of supporting nature to regenerate the natural environment, bringing new (or long forgotten) plants and animals back onto the land.

Jenny is a self-confessed 'nature's child' and animal lover. Following a high-level medical career, she is now a vegan regenerative farmer and founder of Dalton Moor Farm Vegan Fruit Farm and School of Sustainable Living and Wellbeing.

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).

WE NEED YOUR HELP

South Notts Local Group is looking for new Committee Members, to help us promote nature conservation in Rushcliffe.



We are a friendly lot, and meetings are informal, held at a Member's house every two months or so (refreshments included!). We organise and run our annual Walks and Talks Programmes, and occasionally take our Nature Table out to local events, to help raise public awareness.

Demands on your time as a Committee Member would be small, but the rewards great.

The only requirements are that you are a member of the Notts Wildlife Trust, and care for nature and its protection locally.

If you are interested, please email us at southnottswildlife@gmail.com; we will be delighted to welcome you, or provide more information about what's involved.

NOTTS BIODIVERSITY ACTION GROUP

Notts BAG Forum Event – 13th March 2024

“Nottinghamshire’s Intriguing Invertebrates”

With speakers from:



Come and join us at NTU's Brackenhurst Campus for a day of discovery, finding out more about Nottinghamshire's amazing invertebrate communities!



Please contact us on biodiversity@nottsgov.uk for a programme and booking form



To find out about the talks that will be held at the Event, click [here](#).

WILDLIFE FRIENDLY ORCHARDS

If you are fortunate enough to have your own orchard, the *Orchard Project* is suggesting things you can do to increase diversity and help wildlife, including:

- Don't be too tidy: some people like to have a perfectly manicured orchard, but wildlife tends to prefer spaces that are a little more wild.
- Mow as little as possible (as little as once per year) to allow native wildflowers to flourish between your trees, providing more food sources for pollinators.
- Leave dried stems overwinter, and avoid clipping them until temperatures have reached +10C for 7 days to ensure you don't disturb hibernating invertebrates.

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- Instead of raking and removing them, allow leaves to rot into the soil, enriching it with nutrients.
- Where possible, leave deadwood on trees to provide habitat. If the deadwood presents a safety risk, remove it and create woodpiles and hedgerow habitat with it instead.

For more tips on creating a resilient orchard, check out the Orchard Project website [here](#).

HELP OUR SWIFTS!

If there is one bird that epitomises summer in the UK, the Swift has to be one of the more likely candidates: what signifies a warm summer evening better than a group of swifts flying at rooftop level, their shrill calls suggesting they are enjoying themselves?



A superb flyer, a Swift sleeps, eats, bathes and even mates on the wing, and rarely touches the ground. (*Image RBC*). Swifts pair for life, returning to the same site each year for a little nest renovation before laying and incubating their eggs. They like to live in houses and churches, squeezing through tiny gaps to nest inside roofs. But as more old buildings are renovated and gaps in soffits closed up, Swift nest sites are fast disappearing. This, in part,

resulted in Swifts being added to the red list in the 2021 UK Conservation Status Report. Red is the highest conservation priority, with species on this list needing urgent action. Species on this list, such as Swifts, are globally threatened, with big declines in breeding populations and ranges. That's why Swifts urgently need our help. (*Source: RSPB*).

It's good, therefore, to report that Rushcliffe Borough Council (RBC) has unanimously passed a motion to ensure at least 50 per cent of homes in new developments in the Borough will now include "swift bricks" to encourage these endangered birds to nest in new communities. You can read more about this [here](#).

But, we can all do something more with existing buildings to help these beautiful birds: by installing a Swift brick in a wall, or putting up a nestbox, you could give a Swift a place to rest and raise a family. The *Swift Conservation* organisation's website [here](#) provides some useful information.

NETWORK RAIL

Network Rail (East Midlands) are looking to identify 'natural environment stakeholders' within a one kilometre corridor of their tracks. This is part of a major piece of work being carried out in conjunction with Wildlife Trust consultancies looking at how Network Rail can better manage its natural capital in conjunction with its neighbours. In Nottinghamshire, EMEC (Notts Wildlife Trust's



ecology consultancy) have been commissioned to take the lead. More information about this work can be found [here](#).



The first vital step to enhancing biodiversity alongside and close to the railway is understanding what biodiversity already exists and the opportunities for supporting it. Over the coming months and years, Network Rail will combine data from their own records, with satellite imagery, and with other publicly available ecological

records. But, to add the most value, they need local knowledge. What is the local story? What are the local priorities and opportunities? (Image: NWT).

The project team wants to hear about:

- Important species present alongside and close to the railway – particularly within 1km of the railway track
- The existing management of wildlife sites within 1km of the railway, and the priorities that are being worked towards, both now and in the future
- Opportunities for biodiversity enhancement alongside the railway, perhaps through potential habitat creation, restoration, or a change in vegetation management – how can management of the local railway amplify biodiversity outcomes across the local area?

Please use the [online survey](#) to share your knowledge about specific sites. If you would like to share details about multiple sites, or can offer landscape level insight, you may prefer to email details to NRBiodiversity@emec-ecology.co.uk.

NEW YEAR PLANT HUNT



BSBI (Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland) is offering us a chance to shake off the midwinter blues and contribute to citizen science, and help them learn more about how our wild and naturalised plants are responding to a changing climate.

Joining the Hunt for the first time? Know somebody who might like to get involved? Register now to find out what's happening where and to receive resources to help you find and identify the plants most likely to be in bloom:

<https://bsbi.org/new-year-plant-hunt>



BIRDS

This month, I've come across three pieces of research relating to birds: birds helping nature; birds helping humans, and birds suffering from human activity.

I seem to recall Sir David Attenborough, on one more than one occasion, talking about significant declines in coral reefs, but a recently-published study by Lancaster University suggests that nature may have an inbuilt mitigation effect. Researchers have found that when colonies of seabirds live on islands adjacent to coral reefs, they more than doubled the growth of the corals, thanks to their droppings. Seabirds roosting on islands drop guano rich in nitrogen and phosphate nutrients which when washed into the sea by rain fertilise the corals, encouraging growth. Reefs adjacent to islands on which rats had devastated birdlife did not show the same growth, so eradicating rats on the islands should encourage the return of seabirds and help the reefs to recover. More information on the research can be found [here](#).



For centuries, hunter-gatherers of the Hadza tribe in Tanzania, and the Yao community in Mozambique have used birds to help them find honey. The Greater Honeyguide specialises in finding wild bees' nests in trees, and will lead people to them; the hunter gets honey, the bird beeswax. A study published in the journal *Science* shows the hunters use sounds to 'speak' to the birds, which appear to convey man's trustworthiness, and that the birds can discriminate between human sounds and respond more readily to those used by people they have worked with before. (Image: Wikipedia).

A more disturbing account of human/bird interaction is described in *Artificial light at night is a top predictor of bird migration stopover density* (which can be found [here](#)), a study by scientists using ten million pieces of radar data to map bird migration in the US. It found that migrating birds in need of rest and food during long migrations can be drawn to the lights of cities, leading many to die in collisions with buildings and cables. On one occasion in October, over 1,000 birds died in a single night after crashing into a Chicago skyscraper.

Interestingly, a week after this paper was published, the American Bird Conservatory published a blog post entitled 'Birds Flying Into Windows? Truths About Birds & Glass Collisions from ABC Experts' (which can be found [here](#)), describing the nature and scale of the problem, and offering a range of potential solutions and mitigating measures

DISAPPEARING INVERTEBRATES

A piece in the *Times* reports on an international study published in the journal *Nature* (which can be found [here](#)) that has found that 'species once the most common have suffered the biggest decline among invertebrates, potentially explaining why there appear to be fewer insects today'.



Analysis of data from more than 900 sites across the world over as long as 64 years shows that 'Species that were previously the most abundant had declined on average 8 per cent per year, while the number for all species was much lower, at about 1.5 per cent'.

Professor Jonathan Chase, one of the study's authors, said "We might like to think that at least the most abundant species would be more resistant to human pressures. That maybe it's just the rarer species in decline. We find this isn't the case, and in fact the species that would seem to be most robust are instead most susceptible to the changing world around us".

The report adds that '... the losses mattered because birds tended to eat the most abundant insects and that common invertebrates provided important "ecosystem services" from pollinating plants to controlling pest species".

THIS YEAR'S NEW SPECIES

This year, scientists at the Natural History Museum discovered 815 new species. 619 of these were wasps, with the majority belonging to a group known as the *Encyrtidae*. According to the Museum's Scientific Associate Dr John Noyes '... the *Encyrtidae* is probably one of the most important groups of insects in biocontrol, or the use of natural enemies to control agricultural and forest pests. In the past 60 years or so, three species have been incredibly important. One in preventing the possible starvation of up to 300 million people in Africa, a second preventing the rainforest from destruction in Thailand, and another the collapse of the economy of Togo.'

Fourteen of the wasp species found belong to a completely new genus, which has been named *Dalek*, in recognition of the 60th anniversary of *Doctor Who*.

While 574 new species were found in the jungles of Costa Rica, others were found in more prosaic locations, including a stick insect found on a rubbish bin in Australia, and a moth found in Ealing.

Much more information can be found on the Museum's website [here](#).

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 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 January are as follows:

Sat 6th Wilwell Farm Cutting

Sat 13th Wilford Claypit Meadow Park

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- Sun 14th Grizzled Skipper – GCRN East Leake (Lime Sidings)
- Tue 23rd Grizzled Skipper – Flawborough Footpath and Triangle
- Sat 27th Springdale 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

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 29th December 2023