

Tysoe Wildlife – 2023-24

Here is a brief overview of the plans and activities of Tysoe Wildlife over the past year.



Mission statement

Our aim is to preserve and nurture nature in the Parish of Tysoe for everyone to enjoy, by protecting natural habitats and encouraging greater biodiversity in animals and plants. We hope to turn Tysoe into even more of a Wildlife Friendly Parish.

Wildflower areas



There are now wildflower areas in St Mary's Churchyard, School Lane, along the margins of the playing fields, and at the junction of Sandpits Road and Oxhill Road ('triangle'). A few residents have also developed their own wildflower areas. There are Cowslips, Wild Daffodils, Wild Carrot, Red Campion, Knapweed and Lady's Smock, to name but a few. The Cowslips in particular have multiplied since last year. This year we have more 'new' species in all areas and, for example, it's good to see Common Sorrel in School Lane, which is a host plant of the Small Copper Butterfly.

The new 'triangle' at the junction of Sandpits Road and Oxhill Road was sown with a mixture of wild and garden flower seeds in 2023, which produced a very colourful display by 19th July when there was a walk around the wildlife areas in the village. Further seeds have been added this spring and it is starting to look colourful again.



No Mow May

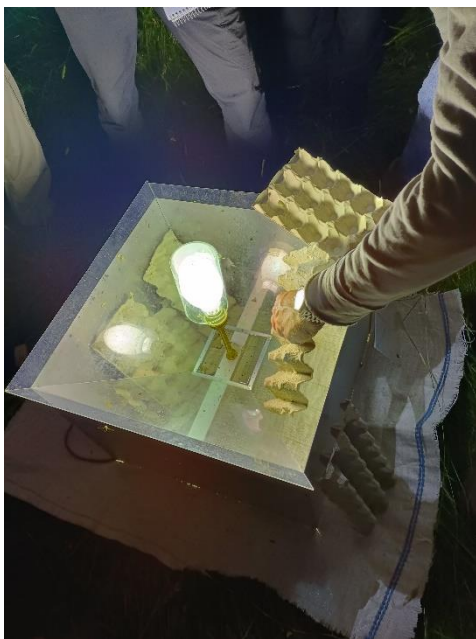
Most of the verges in Tysoe have taken part in 'No Mow May 2024' and there has been a better display of wildflowers than in previous years, possibly due to the large amount of rainfall in the spring. Our thanks go to everyone for their support for this annual initiative.

Bats

One of the aims of the wildflower areas is to increase the amount of insect food for birds, bats and other wildlife. Last summer the Warwickshire Bat Group installed bat detectors in two locations in the parish – in gardens in Lower Tysoe and Westcote. Bats can be identified by the high frequency sounds they make whilst flying. The main species in both locations were Common Pipistrelles, but there were also Noctules and Soprano Pipistrelles and at Westcote there were Barbastelles, which are a rare species. The Bat Group subsequently installed a detector near King John's Lane and this recorded at least 10 of the 14 species ever found in Warwickshire!! The species list is: Barbastelle, Brown Long-Eared, Common pipistrelle, Daubenton's, Leisler's, Natterer's, Noctule, Soprano pipistrelle and Whiskered/Brandt's and Lesser horseshoe.

Moth Night Radway Meadows

Around 20 people joined members of the Warwickshire Moth Group on 17th June 2023 to survey the moths flying at Radway Meadows. It was a good night for moth flight, warm, dry and no bright moonlight. After a short introductory talk about how moths are captured and the aims of the event, three members of the group set up a total of 8 traps. The traps were of various sizes and shapes, some bought from specialist suppliers and some homemade. There's no power supply nearby, so the traps were run using small generators or batteries. Once it got dark a variety of moths swarmed around the lights and some were captured in the 'lobster pot' traps – which were filled with egg trays to give the moths a place to settle. The group walked from trap to trap, carefully opening each one and examining and identifying the moths. These were recorded by the organizer, David Brown. Particularly attractive species captured included the yellow Brimstone Moth, the Beautiful Golden Y and a Small Elephant Hawk Moth (bright pink). In total, over 60 species were captured. We think this is the first time that Radway Meadows has been surveyed in this way and the information will contribute to the Warwickshire species records and



were sent to the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust who manage the meadows as a nature reserve.

Plants in Radway Meadows – survey planned for 7th June 2024

The meadows themselves are magnificent in June, a carpet of yellow rattle, together with a variety of other flower species. They are a great example of how yellow rattle suppresses the more vigorous grasses - we're aiming for the same effect in the wildflower areas in the churchyard, School Lane and around the edges of the playing fields. The Warwickshire Plant Group are going to survey Radway Meadows on 7th June 2024 and it will be interesting to compare what they find with previous surveys.

Workshop and activity week in St Mary's Church.

Understanding where our food comes from was a key learning point of the Children's Activity Week from 7th-11th August. It was open to primary school aged children who live in the Tysoe district. Thirty children aged from 5-11 attended the week where they learnt about the different sorts of farming in and around Tysoe. The village of Tysoe sits in the



heart of a farming community. We are surrounded by fields that grow crops and/or graze sheep and cattle. We can watch the changes in the seasons happening all around us, but we wanted to go further and find out more about the lives of our farmers. Every morning had a different theme.

Monday saw a visit to see sheep with farmer Brian, where the children heard about the lifecycle of the animals and what they are called at the different life stages, how rams are also called 'tups'; why the farmer has to vaccinate them to keep them healthy and how he helps the ewes with lambing in spring. They all learnt how farming had changed over the years with advances in farm machinery; how powerful tractors and combine harvesters have taken the place of horses, enabling farmers to become more productive and efficient, and how clever farm robots and drones are being developed.

Tuesday was all about soil and the wonder of worms. The children added water to loam, clay and sandy soils to see how they separated into different strata. They discovered how



the nutrients in soil help plants grow and made cress heads to take home with them. They held earthworms, learnt about worm anatomy and their lifecycle and watched the earthworms pull organic matter (leaves and plants) down into the soil. The children played a composting game and made extendable worm cards and bead inchworms for the display.

Wednesday was all about arable farming and bread making with a demonstration from Sarah, a local artisan baker. The children watched as a noisy mill ground the wheat into flour. They saw the different stages in making sour dough bread and got to taste it afterwards, along with other types of bread made from different grains.

On Thursday the children engaged with chickens and ducks in the churchyard with Anthony from Cotswold Chickens. He explained all about the birds, what they eat, the different breeds, how long they live. The children were shown how to hold the birds, and Anthony

brought along some eggs and they learnt about egg laying and egg hatching. The children completed the lifecycle of a hen on a worksheet and tested the freshness of eggs by watching them float or sink in water. The craft activity was making colourful hens, the bodies based on the outline of their hands.

Our week culminated with a workshop at Happy Hereford's Herberts Farm, thanks to



farmers Monica and Helen. They had organised some really fascinating activities including a science experiment to replicate the digestive system of a cow. The morning started with a safety briefing, making the children aware of the dangers on a working farm. The children were told not to climb on bales, frighten the animals by shouting and to be observant for moving vehicles. Once briefed, the different groups set about the various activities: one group

heading off to see the cattle in the field and feed the bulls kept in the barn, another getting involved in the experiment, while the third group made crows and hung them around a scarecrow propped against the hay bales. The children took turns to pin on the scarecrow's carrot nose whilst blindfolded. The morning finished with a treasure hunt around the farm based on fun facts, reinforcing key messages from the week. Our workshop ended with a rousing rendition of 'Old MacDonald had a farm', complete with actions, to the parents and the presentation of a certificate to each child for attending the farm workshop. Thanks to the Hereford Cattle Society, the children also left with their Happy Herefords' goody bag.

As St Mary's church hosted the event for four of the five mornings, there was a report on the week at the Sunday service. Lucy, Martha and Albert, who attended the week, told the congregation about their personal highlights. A big thank you to our dedicated group of volunteers who made the week possible.

Making Space for Nature

There are regular articles in the Tysoe Record about nature, locally and nationally.

South Warwickshire Area Network for Wildlife (SWAN)

A number of villages in south Warwickshire, plus Shipston-on Stour, have formed a network of wildlife friendly community groups. This group now has a constitution and a managing committee, Rosemary Collier is currently Chair. We meet every 4-6 weeks and this has been a great forum for exchanging information about events and activities.

The aims of the Swan for Wildlife network are to:

1. Share information, knowledge, resources and skills across the network.
2. Support small groups within the network and help those just starting out.
3. Provide an umbrella organisation/network bringing together grass-roots wildlife groups so they can work in concert and learn from one another.
4. Raise awareness for the wildlife, engaging with people and encouraging them to make space for nature within their communities.
5. Linking with national organisations and staying in touch with them; sharing this intelligence with the whole network.
6. Inspiring each other to achieve more.
7. Campaigning and lobbying as a network where we perceive there is need, (but this is not our exclusive remit.)
8. Protecting and improving the environment, supporting wildlife projects within members' groups, within the wider network and in South Warwickshire.
9. Identifying local issues and campaigning for them, supporting conservation-based groups and linking with them.
10. Organising events to help to spread the wildlife message and to raise funds to support the operations of the SWAN network.

This is an important time for biodiversity in the UK as the new Local Nature Recovery Strategy is underway <https://wcslnp.wixsite.com/localnature/lhrs>. This focuses on supporting biodiversity at the landscape scale and so SWAN is very pertinent. In addition, Stratford District Council have recently declared an 'Ecological Emergency' and will be focusing on ways to increase their support for biodiversity. In September there will be a workshop for local councils in Warwickshire on the development of Local Nature Action Plans. Although local councils do not have to produce a Local Nature Action Plan, they do have a duty to consider biodiversity and the natural environment in their decision-making.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Tysoe Parish Council, St Mary's Church, the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) and a large number of individuals for their support during the year.

Prepared by Rosemary Collier & Shirley Cherry
June 2024