

Teme Valley Wildlife Group

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2026

Stephanie Mocroft's View from the Teme Valley

The heat and drought of this year's summer have been a trial for many plants and animals but, as always in nature, some species have been able to make the most of extreme climatic conditions.

Two groups of insects which did particularly well this summer were butterflies and dragonflies. Of the former, I spotted a species which I'd never seen before, and of the latter I recognised a species I'd only previously encountered in Wales.

I'll start with the butterfly, which was a variety known as the Clouded Yellow and which I noticed visiting grassland flowers in Pensax. A few days later I saw it again whilst on a ramble through Neen Sollars.



It is a migrant species which flies into Britain from Africa and southern Europe during the months of April and May. It then lays eggs here, on clovers and lucerne, and produces one or sometimes two broods of offspring.

Like those of a similar migrant butterfly, the Painted Lady, the numbers arriving each year vary enormously. Oftentimes no individuals reach as far north as the West Midlands, even if they manage to fly across the Channel at all.

The Clouded Yellow is middling in size, smaller than the Painted Lady, and a deep yellow colour, more so than a Brimstone. On the underside of the upper wing is a black spot and on the lower one is a circle of white with a coloured border round it.

The upper wings are more difficult to see, as they are only visible in flight, but they are yellow with a surround of black round the edges. Pink legs and green eyes are distinguishing features according to the field guide, but a much closer look than I got would be necessary to confirm them.

The second insect was a dragonfly which made a surprise visit to our garden pond. In beautiful black and gold, it was a species called the Golden-ringed Dragonfly.

It was a surprise because this is a heathland species which is usually recorded in Worcestershire only in the Wyre Forest.



We were fortunate in having binoculars to hand, so we were able to admire its stunning green eyes, slender jet-black body and smart gold bands.

It was very accommodating and as we studied the field guide it flew up close to inspect what we were doing and then perched motionless on a pondside plant for long enough to have its picture taken.

Smart characters, dragonflies, not surprising perhaps, since they've been on the planet since before the age of the dinosaurs.

The Golden-rings' usual habitat is heathland or woodland where small acidic streams or seepages provide the right conditions for their eggs and larvae.

I wondered if it was the fact that our pond water was rather murky, after a great deal of evaporation had lowered the water level, that had made our visitor come for a look, especially since the water was still which is not its usual preference.

Even so, it must have liked what it saw because it was back again a week or so later. Whatever had brought it, we were delighted to see it and hope it comes again another year.



Teme Valley Wildlife Group's Monthly Meetings and Talks

September's talk was given by one of our newer members, Ros Bissell, who is the owner of Moors Meadow. This is an intriguing 7-acre organic hillside garden overlooking the Kyre valley and only a short distance from the Stoke Bliss and Kyre Village Hall.

The talk 'Moors Meadow: a Wildlife Garden' gave an insight into the creation and ongoing work in the garden to grow both native and rarely seen cultivated plants in a way that works with nature and encourages wildlife.



In particular, Ros has created a wide variety of habitats with differing height tree species, native ground cover plants and nectar-rich flowers. Ros showed that a garden can be both beautiful and wildlife-friendly, with both native and non-native plantings.

Certainly, all the hard work has paid off with the garden being voted Regional Winner in the UK-wide RHS Partner Garden of the Year 2025 competition.

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October's talk will be given by Beth Norris at Stoke Bliss and Kyre Village Hall and is about 'The River Teme Catchment'.

The Teme is Worcestershire's only river habitat SSSI and is of national importance for the flora and fauna it supports. But it is more than just a river that makes up a catchment, and this presentation will seek to explore all the challenges faced by the catchment as a whole, connecting a drop of rain with the wider water landscape

Please make a note in your diary to attend the next meeting and listen to Beth's talk at 7:30pm, on Thursday 8th October at Stoke Bliss and Kyre Village Hall, WR15 8RS.

We look forward to seeing you there.

For up-to-date information on the wildlife being seen in the area, or to record your own sightings, please visit our Facebook page. For news on upcoming events, please visit our website (www.teme-valley-wildlife.org).



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Wild Life

It always seems that October is the month when decisions about managing the orchards and meadows are determined by the effects of the weather.

The overall aim is to reclaim areas of grassland where bramble and bracken have not taken the earlier hint from the scythe blade or the more recent hooves of the Dexters.



I have a love/hate relationship with bramble, unlike bracken where it is a straightforward hate/hate.

Bramble flowers provide a food source for bees and butterflies in spring, the fruits of late summer are eaten by mammals and the year-round thorns provide protection for foraging birds and emerging tree saplings.

My only problem with bramble is that it doesn't know when to stop.



Although perennial in nature, *Rubus fruticosus* is biennial in habit, sending out its trailing shoots up to 3m in length during the first year, followed by flowering and fruiting side shoots in the second. It also

has the ability to produce roots wherever the shoot tip makes contact with the ground and start its persistent probing all over again. The original organic version of my childhood Slinky toy.

And it is these thorny escapees from the steep scrubby areas that need knocking back before they become settled in the grassland and start crowding out our more compliant wildflowers. The scythe makes short work of bracken – either for leaving in place to wilt and shrivel, or for collecting to rot down behind the barn –

but, as the seasons develop, the bramble shoots become more fibrous and tend to take the energy out of the scythe swing and with it, its ability to cut. The older brown woody stems are worse still.

It is at this point that I revert to a blunter but more powerful instrument: the alpine tractor with its PTO-driven flail.

Although not as agile as two legs and a scythe, the tractor's 4-wheel drive and low centre of gravity make it a very capable machine on our hillside farm.

But reasonably dry ground is required to provide grip, and the frequency and volume of any rain, as we head further into autumn, becomes more unpredictable.

The warm but showery weather of September has also reinvigorated the later-flowering plants, increasing the likelihood of collateral damage.

However, during the nine years that we have lived here, I've learnt that the wildflowers are a resilient bunch and, as long as the base of the plant and its roots remain undamaged, they will return undiminished the following year.

Better still, those that have been suffering the unneighbourly behaviour of *Rubus fruticosus* will be in a much better position to use their energies to flower and seed, rather than trying to compete with this ultimate survivor.



Michael Northwood



Moths of the Month

So, with the advent of autumn comes the emergence of a group of moths going by the name of Sallows. There are perhaps a dozen moths in the UK of this group and in the Teme Valley, we get four turning up quite regularly to light traps.

All four are considered woodland / damp woodland species and all start turning up September through to October. As such, our Teme Valley habitat is an ideal environment for each of these species, all of which occupy slightly different food

niches so as not to compete for the same food sources. They are all of a similar size, having a wing span of 27-35 mm.

Sallow



The Sallow is perhaps the least well marked of the group, although markings can be quite variable. The larvae initially feed on Sallow catkins

before moving onto a mixture of herbaceous plants.

Centre-barred Sallow

The Centre-barred Sallow with its distinct dark cut off bar across its wings is probably the most common of the four species hereabouts and certainly the first



to make an appearance in early September. The larvae feed on Ash. They burrow into newly-formed buds in the spring and feed on the new leaves and flowers.

Barred Sallow



The Barred Sallow is superficially similar to the Centre-barred Sallow. However, the larvae don't compete for the same food source, with this species feeding on Beech

and Field Maple, the latter which is plentiful in the Teme Valley. Like others, the larvae feed at first on the newly forming buds, migrating to leaves and flowers of these trees.

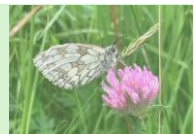
Pink-barred Sallow

The beautiful Pink-barred Sallow is probably the second most common of the four we see here in the Valley. The larvae do compete with The Sallow moth in that the larvae also feed on Sallow catkins before moving on to flowers, leaves and other herbaceous plants.



Danny Arnold

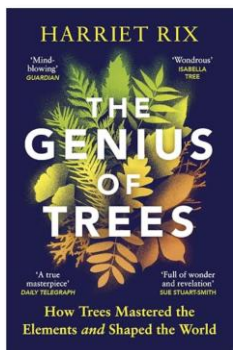
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Book of the Month



If you're thinking that 'The Genius of Trees' is another foray into the anthropomorphic 'wood-wide web', you'd be wrong. But this doesn't take away the 'genius' of how trees have evolved and survived over

millions of years despite their changing environment. The book is thoroughly researched by Harriet Rix and is centred around how trees have been able to shape the elements and many of the species around them.

There are some astonishing examples of trees that produce volatile organic compounds (VOC's) that can 'seed' the atmosphere above to produce rain! Harriet Rix takes the reader on a 400 million year journey through time and a few thousand miles across the world to explain the remarkable evolution of trees and will leave you in no doubt about their genius.



What To Look Out For In October.....

Or rather, what to listen out for in October. Family life can be tough for some of our birds of prey - and none more so than the Tawny Owl juveniles.



The early life of the Tawny Owllet during the summer months is one of pampered contentment, while the parents busy themselves catching voles and mice from pasture and woodland areas.

The juvenile owls must think that this easy life will be endless, but end it does, very suddenly in September or October.

Not only does the supply of food stop but the youngsters are forcibly evicted from their home and made to fend for themselves.

This means finding food and a nesting hole for the first time. Unfortunately for them, the majority of Tawny territories are already 'owned' and fiercely defended by existing paired adults. So begins the night-time calling and caterwauling as the male and female youngsters try to find an unoccupied place to stay and an unpaired mate to woo.

Unlike the regular high-pitched 'kee-wick' of the adult female and deeper hoot of the male, as they maintain contact, the intruding juveniles have a rasping call that sounds more desperate as they're challenged.

However, if they get through this tough-love period, they will often live for four years and, maybe, many more.

And Three To Find.....

Despite the hot, dry summer, the rain showers have softened the ground sufficiently for some of the more identifiable fungi to appear:

Parasol Mushroom (*Macrolepiota procera*)



Usually found in old pasture, the mycelium of the Parasol Mushroom breaks down leaf litter and plant debris to produce mineral nutrients that are released back into the soil.

The tall stem lifts the cap clear of the surrounding grass, to allow the breeze to spread its spores.

Trooping Funnel (*Infundibulicybe geotropa*)



With a latin name that doesn't exactly trip off the tongue, the Trooping Funnel tends to be seen in and around the woodland edge and near hedgerows. It performs a similar function to the Parasol but is also

capable of breaking down woody debris. As the 'trooping' part of its name suggests, quite large numbers are often seen, making large arcs in grassland and even complete rings several metres in diameter.

Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*)

The Fly Agaric is the quintessential fungi of fairy stories, with its signal red cap and white stem.

Unlike the other two fungi, Fly Agaric is mycorrhizal, meaning that the underground mycelium attaches to the roots of a host tree. The fungus supplies the tree with phosphorus and nitrogen in far greater quantities than could be achieved by the roots alone and, in return, the Fly Agaric receives sugars produced by the tree via photosynthesis.



Dates For Your Calendar:



Thursday 8th October @ 7.30pm:

Talk by Beth Norris at Stoke Bliss and Kyre Village Hall - 'The River Teme Catchment'.

Beth is the Wildlife and Water Officer for Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and leads their input into water and wetland advice. The Teme is Worcestershire's only river habitat SSSI, of national importance for the flora and fauna it supports. But it is more than just a river that makes up a catchment and this presentation will seek to explore all the challenges faced by the catchment as a whole, connecting a drop of rain with the wider water landscape

Thursday 12th Nov. @ 7.30pm:

Our final talk of the year will be given by Nigel Woodall at Stoke Bliss and Kyre Village Hall, entitled 'Deer of The Wyre Forest and Beyond'.

A keen photographer, Nigel has been interested in the deer of The Wyre Forest for over 40 years, and he has also written about the rut for The British Naturalists' Association.

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