

# Teme Valley Wildlife Group

## NEWSLETTER MARCH 2026

### Stephanie Mocroft's View from the Teme Valley

The Teme Valley Wildlife Group's first talk in 2026 was on the subject of owls and, as luck would have it, one made a rare appearance in our garden around the same time.

During 30 years residence in the Teme valley, I have only ever seen four types of owl around here. The most common, which I'm hearing at dusk nearly every day at the moment, is the tawny owl.

Tawnies are the large chestnut brown owls who sound the well-known tu-whit, tu-woo noise, which is answered kee-wick by the females. They are the commonest British owl, live in parks and woods, hunt by night and roost by day.



Tawny Owl

I have had two lovely encounters with tawnies in my garden. Years ago, my husband and I were watching one hooting loudly from our neighbour's large weeping willow tree.

Our cat joined us, all looking up into the branches. Suddenly the owl took off and flew directly over us as if to give us a better view – even to the cat.

The second occasion was when I went up into our orchard in the middle of the night to check my sheep during lambing. As I tended to them, I saw a silent owl sitting in the tree next to their sheep shelter. He was watching me and looked very wise, as if to say that he'd seen more lambing than I had!

Beautiful, white-fronted barn owls I've only seen occasionally, and never in my garden. These birds have a reputation for being able to fly utterly silently, which, combined with their white colouration gives them a ghostly aspect.

Driving along quiet country lanes at dawn and dusk may reveal their graceful hunting habits. Quite a few times, I've stopped my car to watch one quartering a field or dipping low either side of a lane hedge looking for small furry animals.



Long-eared Owl

Also beside a lane, sitting in the shadow of an enormous oak tree, I once saw a long-eared owl. This had beautiful amber eyes and was keeping dry atop a fence-post during a night of torrential rain.

But the bird encountered in January was a little owl. And, surprisingly, it was being chased by two chattering mistle thrushes in broad daylight.

Little owls are not native birds, but they are little, just 8 and a half inches tall. They were introduced from the Continent at the end of the last century and are birds of the open countryside. They frequently fly by day as well as by night and feed on small birds and a large variety of insects.

Mistle thrushes are bigger, at 10 and a half inches tall, and highly territorial. They breed early in the season and are at their most aggressive in February when they have eggs in the nest.



My pair was clearly having no truck with a passing little owl. They made a fearful racket seeing it off, but the little character didn't have time to make the call that gives it its common name of screech owl.



### Teme Valley Wildlife Group's Monthly Meetings and Talks

February's meeting welcomed award-winning photographer Andrew Fusek Peters with a talk based on his recent book, 'Garden Safari'. Andrew has spent the last eight years visiting a range of gardens to photograph the incredible diversity of species that can be found in green spaces all over the country.

Once again, it was a full house in the village hall and Andrew's animated talk was very well received. His photographs, the result of many hours patiently waiting for the perfect shot, were amazing.



The photos also provided the perfect opportunity to showcase our new HD projector that the Group was able to purchase following the very generous grant received from Councillor Bowen of Worcestershire County Council.



February's talk will be given by Alicia Leow-Dyke and is an update on the Welsh Beaver Project. The Project is working to re-establish wild beavers in Wales.

Feasibility studies have been undertaken and proposals are being developed. Beavers are now starting to return to Wales with a small number living in the Dyfi catchment area.

Alicia has been the Welsh Beaver Project Officer for Wildlife Trusts Wales since 2016. With over 10 years of experience of working with beavers, Alicia is well placed to inform us about their managed re-introduction.

Please make a note in your diary to attend the next meeting and listen to Alicia's talk at **7:30pm, on Thursday March 12<sup>th</sup> at Stoke Bliss and Kyre Village Hall, WR15 8RS.**

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](http://www.teme-valley-wildlife.org)).



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### Wild Life

A brighter day than normal, although the sun continues to lurk behind milky grey cloud. We keep a picture of a sunny day pinned to the kitchen wall to make sure we recognise the sun when we eventually see it again.

As we walk up the track between the house and the main barn, a constant stream of water is flowing along the ditch that runs parallel with the track, having completed half its journey from the soggy hayfield at the top of the hill to the swollen brook on the bottom boundary.

Our Dexter cattle are inside the barn and will remain so probably until 2027 the way the weather is going, but ideally, we should be able to let them out in April or May if the grass is growing strongly and the ground is firm enough to carry the weight on their hooves without leaving muddy craters.



Not surprisingly, they're quite content to stay in the barn on dry straw bedding, with a constant supply of the sweet-smelling haylage that we cut and baled over 18 months ago in the summer of 2024.

On leaving the barn, our dogs glance back, unsure which way we're going next. I point towards the opening into the wood, behind the barn, and they willingly run to the gate, rather than continue up the hill on the farm track.



We take the lower path that runs parallel with the boundary of the Lower Orchard and Meadow, in a part of the wood known as Spring Grove. I had planned to do some more coppicing in the wood over the winter season to continue opening-up the overgrown areas.

However, wielding a chainsaw while trying to maintain some sort stability on a 40° wet, muddy slope isn't really my idea of fun, so it will have to wait until next winter.

At the far end of the wood, we have built a stile over the fence to make it easier to access the meadow and the return route back to the house. However, the dogs wriggle commando-style through a hole in the bottom of the fence.

At this time of year, I'm always looking for signs of new growth in our wildflowers and I'm starting to learn the leaf shapes that identify them: the wrinkled paddle leaves of Primrose, the glossy heart-shaped foliage of Lesser Celandine and the blunt arrow-heads of Common Sorrel.



Returning to the house, we pass our indecisive pond which, given the constant rainfall since mid-January, now has a misplaced confidence in its water-holding capabilities.



However, I'm actually looking forward to the day when the water level starts to drop, because it'll mean that the rain is less frequent and spring – and some elusive sunshine – are well on the way.

Michael Northwood



### Moths of the Month

#### Satellite moth

Appearing first in September, then intermittently during the winter through to the following April, it's easy to see how the Satellite moth came by its name.

With its prominent white, or sometimes orange, spot on each wing being augmented with two smaller satellite spots of the same colour.... like moons around a planet, the Satellite moth is relatively easy to identify.



It does range in size from 32-42mm in wing span and is a large moth that has adapted to an over-wintering capability as an adult. The larvae, which appear in the spring, are fairly gregarious feeding on a wide range of deciduous trees and, as such, are considered common in the Teme Valley – albeit thinly spread. The larvae of the Satellite moth are also carnivorous towards other larvae.

#### Dotted Border

The Dotted Border moth was clearly given its name owing to fresh specimens clearly displaying ... a Dotted Border !



One of the first geometers to be on the wing every year. This moth is one which can turn up to light almost anywhere in our area, from woodland to local gardens and open countryside to scrubland. Like many of the winter-flying moths, only the males have true wings and thus capable of flight.

The females are flightless with only a stubby vestigial wing. As such, they will climb high vegetation to release pheromones into the air in an attempt to induce a male in for mating.

Their appearance is short lived, only generally being seen February through to April. Common at this time of year in the Teme Valley with a wing span of 27-32mm The larvae feed on a variety of deciduous trees.

Danny Arnold

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### Book of the Month



Towards the end of 2021, Sophie Pavelle challenged herself to find ten rare native species that could disappear by 2050 and be forgotten by the end of the century if their habitats continued to decline.

Travelling the length of Britain on foot, by bicycle and a lot of trains, Sophie caught up with the researchers and conservationists doing their utmost to save marsh fritillaries on Bodmin Moor, seagrass in the Llyn Peninsula and mountain hare in the Cairngorms.

*Forget me not* is the unusual combination of an enlightening and easy read. The book is well researched and Sophie is an excellent communicator with an endearing sense of humour – despite the gravity of the subject matter.



### App of the Month: Birda



This is an app for those who enjoy being outside in nature and take an interest in identifying birds and keeping records, without being too obsessive.

If you have managed to photograph a bird but are unable to identify it, the app's AI will try to do it for you and give a percentage certainty. There is also the opportunity to share your sighting with like-minded people within the app's community to improve that certainty.

There is a species guide to give useful information on habitat, distribution and behaviour, together with identification tips and examples of bird song and alarm calls.

All this for free! It is possible to 'upgrade' to Birda+ for £35.99 a year, but for most people, this won't be necessary, given the features that are available in the free version.

### What To Look Out For In March.....

1<sup>st</sup> March heralds the beginning of meteorological spring – although, more in hope than expectation – and although the trees may be short of leaves, the flowers of plants, such as Lesser Celandine and Common Dog-violet will be providing the traditional yellows and blues of Spring.



*Lesser Celandine*



*Common Dog-violet*

The white sprays of blackthorn flowers will be coming into bloom, providing a valuable source of nectar and pollen for insects. Unlike their hedgerow neighbour, hawthorn, the flowers of the blackthorn appear before their leaves.

The primrose, the first rose (prima rosa) will be appearing in fields and woodlands near you soon, if they're not out already, like scattered pale lemon posies.



And who will be posting the first sighting of a chiffchaff this year, excepting those birds who may have decided to over-winter here rather than make the perilous journey back from their winter holidays in southern Europe.



### Common Bird Survey

A quick reminder to those of you who would still like to get involved with the Local Common Bird Survey for 2026.

Please contact Danny Arnold via the Teme Valley Wildlife Group Facebook page.

And if you're already taking part, please make sure you update the online spreadsheet before the end of each month.



### Dates For Your Calendar:



**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March @ 7:30pm:**  
Teme Valley Wildlife Group Annual General Meeting at Stoke Bliss and Kyre Village Hall, WR15 8RS. All are welcome!

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March @ 8:00pm:**  
Talk by Alicia Leow-Dyke at Stoke Bliss and Kyre Village Hall to give an update on the Welsh Beaver Project.

With over 10 years of experience of working with beavers, Alicia is well placed to let us know about the managed re-introduction of beavers into Wales and how the Project is focusing on their re-establishment.

**29<sup>th</sup> March @ 1:00am:**  
British Summer Time begins 😊!!!!!!

**9<sup>th</sup> April @ 7:30pm:**  
Talk by John Lightfoot – "The Shropshire Barn Owl Group". John will answer the question about whether nest boxes can increase the number of Barn Owls in Shropshire. You will also learn about the main reason for Barn Owl decline and what we can do to help these beautiful birds increase and thrive.

**14<sup>th</sup> May @ 7:30pm:**  
Talk by Alison Wakeman – "Awareness of Bees and their Importance in the Environment".

To make the most of the talks and allow us to continue to bring you these excellent speakers, please become a full member of Teme Valley Wildlife Group. Annual membership is only £25 and gives you free access to all of 2026's talks and to the guided walks that we are planning to bring during the year.



### Before you go.....

If you have any suggestions or articles for the newsletter, please leave a message on our Facebook page when the newsletter is posted and we'll get back to you. Thank you!

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