

# Action for Wildlife

Newsletter for the Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership

Issue 15

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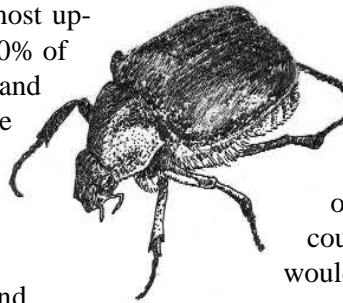
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## Orchards in decline

Research conducted by Worcester City Council on behalf of the Worcester Orchard Workers recently discovered the extent of the decline of Worcestershire's orchards over the last 100 years.

A comparison of Victorian maps and the most up-to-date maps proved that since the 1900s 80% of Worcestershire's orchards have been lost, and that of the orchards remaining in the late 1980s, half have since been lost.

Traditional Orchards are an important wildlife habitat, yet are also a fast declining resource in Worcestershire and currently have no legal protection- hence their



Noble Chafer

neglected orchard in Worcester for the last four years.

This winter the group are running two courses on how to prune orchard trees. One is in Kemerton, south of Bredon Hill, on the 17<sup>th</sup> January, and one in Worcester on the 31<sup>st</sup> January.

An apple tree grafting course is also being run, on 21<sup>st</sup> February. This will demonstrate how to graft traditional Worcestershire varieties of apple tree onto rootstocks. The courses are free to the public. If you would like to book a place or find out more details please contact Rory McClure on 01905 722 500.

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*“since the 1900s 80% of Worcestershire’s orchards have been lost; of the orchards remaining in the late 1980s, half have since been lost.”*

inclusion in the Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan. There are several threatened species closely associated with traditional orchards, such as the Noble Chafer. These rely on the soft rotting heart wood of mature apple trees.

The Worcester Orchard Workers (WOW) are a voluntary group who have been restoring a

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## New faces on the BAP front

Its all change at the Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership as the current BAP Manager - Alex Preston - leaves after christmas for a two year secondment, and Dave Solly has replaced Ian Bamforth as the new chair of the Biodiversity Partnership Steering Group.

Alex is moving to a role as Regional Biodiversity Manager, working for the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership. The post involves working with Regional bodies and other county LBAPs across the West Midlands to help raise the profile of biodiversity at the regional level. Alex said -

*“I have thoroughly enjoyed working for the*

*Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership, helped by the fantastic people that I have worked with"*

*I hope that the new post will provide me with useful experience of working at the regional level, which I can bring back with me to the Worcestershire role in two year's time!"*

The post will be filled during Alex's absence, and is currently being advertised.

Dave Solly is Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's Education Manager, who has been working for the Trust on their education and awareness-raising activities for the last two years. There will be an article from Dave in the next issue of *Action for Wildlife*.

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### Maximising the benefits of Minerals extraction

There is enormous potential to create habitats of high conservation value at mineral sites. The minerals industry has already had a considerable effect on the conservation of habitats and species with many positive benefits such as the creation of lakes for wildfowl, and deep hard rock quarries that provide nesting habitat for some of our rarest birds

The evidence at former quarries demonstrates that mineral sites can support a variety of flora and fauna and this is reflected in the fact that many former quarries are now designated as either Special Wildlife Sites (SWS) or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Many sand and gravel workings and former clay pits have created valuable wetland habitats, providing habitat for migratory and nesting birds and many invertebrates.

Hard rock quarries scattered throughout the Malvern Hills, Cotswold edge and hills in the west of Worcestershire now comprise semi-natural habitats including acid, chalk and neutral grassland of high conservation value and also provide cliffs and ledges for species such as the Peregrine Falcon.

A piece of work is currently being undertaken, funded by DEFRA's Aggregates Sustainability Fund, to improve the understanding of the potential of aggregates sites to contribute towards the BAP process, and identify the restoration capabilities at individual mineral sites. The work will provide

information on the suitability of the creation of BAP habitats in Worcestershire and include an ecological assessment of many former aggregate sites. The ultimate aim of the project is to raise awareness of nature conservation restoration at mineral sites and positively contribute towards the creation of BAP habitats in Worcestershire.




<h3>Targeting Worcestershire</h3> <p>Members of the Biodiversity Partnership Steering Group met recently to consider some of the current habitat targets in the Worcestershire BAP. Part of the reason for this piece of work was to bring local and regional targets into closer alignment, but it was also felt that, 5 years after the launch of the Worcestershire BAP, now would be an appropriate time to be re-visiting the targets.</p> <p>The actions in the current Worcestershire BAP will also soon be looked at and revised by the Biodiversity Partnership.</p>
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<h2>In Brief</h2>	<p><b>Earthwatch</b> are offering fully funded places on Earthwatch field research projects for anyone involved in conservation education or teaching. They are also offering Community Action grants of up to £250</p> <p>Further information and application forms can be downloaded from <a href="http://www.earthwatch.org/europe/corporate/community.html">www.earthwatch.org/europe/corporate/community.html</a>, where you will also find links to Amerada Hess Environmental Awards for Secondary Teachers and Environmental Awards for Primary Teachers 2004.</p>
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## Ancient Trees in Worcestershire

**T**here is nothing quite as awesome as a truly magnificent ancient tree. The landscape, cultural and ecological value of such trees is enormous, which is why they have been included in the Biodiversity Action Plan for Worcestershire.

There is however a lack of information about veteran trees in the county, so a project has been set up to gather information on the veteran trees we have left in Worcestershire, recording where they are found, and what condition they are in. Some recent discoveries have been ancient ash trees at the eastern end of Bredon Hill and ancient lime trees in woods in west Worcestershire.

More help is however needed with this task, which will improve our understanding of the veteran tree resource, and the threats that they face. Perhaps there is an ancient tree near where *you* live which you could complete a survey form about? For more information about the survey and copies of survey forms contact Harry Green on 01386 710377 (see also Issue 10 of *Action For Wildlife*).

