

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Malvern Group 6th April 2017

Chris Ward: Our Changing Wildlife

Chris Ward, ecologist and wildlife photographer, addressed a very complicated subject last Thursday when he talked to WWT Malvern Group. Many species are suffering a catastrophic decline in this country but it is not always easy to define the reason for this. The State of Nature report (2016) identifies several problems including intensive agriculture, climate change and urbanisation. Many animals are killed on our increasingly busy roads and this is part of the reason why hedgehogs have been massively reduced in numbers. Some of our migratory birds are seriously struggling; this is partly because they are finding it more difficult to find food in Africa where they spend the winter. Introduced species are another problem - there were 8 million water voles in this country in 1960, but now only about 100,000, largely because of predation by the American mink.

However it is not all bad news. There are many inspiring examples across the country of action to recover some of our wildlife, like the pine marten and the large blue butterfly. Some habitats have been successfully restored in our uplands, meadows and on the coast. Otters have made a comeback because of our cleaner rivers and less persecution. Bitterns are booming again in our wetland reserves, little egrets are breeding in the country, and grey seal numbers are recovering around our coasts because they are now protected. Some species like bee-eaters and clouded yellow butterflies are increasing because of the warmer temperatures due to climate change.

Alison Uren