

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Malvern Group, Thursday January 7th

Peter Garner: The Wild Plants of the Malvern Hills

Nearly a hundred people attended this meeting, and they were treated to a photographic “walk” from North Hill southwards to Chase End Hill, admiring the flora as they went. Peter showed common plants in colourful profusion like foxgloves and bluebells, tiny rarities like the birdsfoot clover, and surprising beauties like the wavy hair-grass, which turns the hillsides pink as the summer progresses. The leaves of the bilberries on the north and east slopes of the Beacon are a brilliant green in spring and dark red in the autumn, and the little blue berries are delicious. The Western gorse, which tends to grow higher up, flowers from September onwards, while the European gorse with longer spines tends to grow further down and on the commons, flowering from January to August. An unusual plant which grows in large patches in clearance areas is the climbing corydalis, a delicate plant with pretty pale creamy-yellow flowers.

The rarer plants mentioned included upright chickweed, least birdsfoot trefoil, small cudweed, musk storksbill, early forget-me-not and black spleenwort. The attractive spring cinquefoil is in bright yellow patches on the slopes of Swinyard’s Hill. Raggedstone Hill is white with heath bedstraw in July, and in a rocky wall there is smooth catsear and smiths peppergrass. Wild daffodils and wood sorrel carpet the Western slopes of Chase End Hill in spring.

Above all, we were reminded how extraordinarily fortunate we are to live close to the Malvern Hills. Whether we are botanists who spot the tiniest rarity, or observers who simply enjoy the ever-changing colours of the abundant common plants, the Hills are special and beautiful all the year round.

The next meeting is on Thursday February 4th at 7.30 pm at the Lyttelton Rooms in Church Street. Marcus John, a Naturetrek Tour leader, will talk about Scottish Wildlife.



Musk storksbill



Spring cinquefoil