

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Malvern Group

Thursday March 2nd 2017

Nicholas Watts: Farming and Wildlife

Nicholas Watts manages Vine House Farm, situated in Deeping Fen in south Lincolnshire. In the past the area was intensively drained and sprayed with all sorts of chemicals, but in the 1990s Nicholas became aware how seriously this was affecting the birds and other wildlife. He began to adapt his agricultural methods to enable the environment to flourish, with remarkable success, proving that even in this modern age it is possible for a commercial farm supplying supermarkets to be a model for wildlife conservation and a haven for threatened species. Of his 2000 acres, 300 are farmed organically, and 400 acres are devoted to growing sunflowers, red and white millet, canary seed, rape and wheat for the bird food business which is managed by his daughter. He has 8 wind turbines on his land and uses solar panels for energy, he leaves 6 metre margins around the fields to allow flowers to grow which encourage insects, hedges are not cut back while birds are nesting, 5 brick towers have been built for nesting birds including barn owls, and he has persuaded the local drainage board to manage ditches in a more wildlife-friendly manner. Skylarks, meadow pipits, linnets, lapwings, reed buntings, sedge warblers and tree sparrows all flourish on his farm. This was an inspirational talk – if only farmland across the country could be managed in similar fashion, our precious and declining wildlife would be in a far healthier state.

The next meeting of the Malvern Group is on Thursday April 6th at 7.30 pm at the Lyttelton Rooms, Church Street, Malvern. Chris Ward will talk about “Our Changing Wildlife”.



A tree sparrow feeding young at
Vine House Farm



A reed bunting with insects at Vine
House Farm