

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Malvern Group

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> May

Paul Hobson: The Wildlife of British Woodlands

The final talk of this season was a real treat – a stunning display of first-class photographs from the renowned wildlife photographer Paul Hobson. He managed to cover almost everything in an hour and a half: mammals, insects including butterflies and moths, fungi, trees, flowers, birds and beautiful scenery. It is hard to pick out particular photos for special mention, but perhaps the wasp on the broad-leaved helleborine, the short-eared owl in flight, and the lekking capercaillie in Scotland stood out. There was also the remarkable story of how Paul sat in a hide for 14 days waiting for the perfect shot of a woodcock on its nest with its chick, which is very rarely photographed.

Paul put everything in the context of the history of our British woodlands, describing how in the last 1000 years we have very much reduced, managed and replanted the woods to suit our changing needs. Very little “ancient woodland”, defined as woodland more than 500 years old, is now left. In particular there was great change after WW1 and in 1918 the Forestry Commission was set up, which for a long time largely planted pine trees to meet the demands for quick supplies of wood. These days the Forestry Commission plants more mixed woodland with smaller areas of different coniferous species, interspersed with deciduous trees. Over the years we have also introduced many species to our woods, some beneficial and some very harmful. Of the five species of deer in the British Isles, only two are native (roe and red deer), and they all roam the country in ever-increasing numbers, browsing scrubland vegetation and causing problems for woodland insects and birds. Overall he gave us a broad-ranging, fascinating and thought-provoking evening.

The next meeting is after the summer break on September 6<sup>th</sup>, when John Tilt will talk about Limestone and Grassland Butterflies of the UK. As usual at 7.30 pm in the Lyttelton Rooms, Church St, Malvern.

Alison Uren