

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Malvern Local Group meeting

2nd December 2021

Ailsa Craig and Rathlin Island

Richard Newton, from the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, took us to Rathlin Island via his outstanding photography and thoroughly entertaining commentary. With its rugged cliffs and extensive peat bogs, the island is some six miles long and lies midway between Northern Ireland and Scotland's Ayrshire coast. The boat from Girvan stopped first at Ailsa Craig, a few miles from the Scottish coast. This rocky outcrop is an RSPB reserve and home to the third largest gannet colony in the British Isles, with over 30,000 pairs, together with large numbers of guillemot, razorbill and kittiwake. Wildlife Trust members were able to see examples of rare Blue Hone and Ailsa Craig Green granites from which virtually all curling stones are made.

Then on to Rathlin Island. Exploring the island, visitors found many rare species of flora and fauna. Amongst the rarest: the unique Irish Golden Hare, and the corncrake. Large numbers of orchids flourish, including the Northern (Irish) Marsh Orchid, and bogs and marshy areas support rare sphagnum mosses and ferns. Rathlin's rocky cliffs are colonised by thousands of seabirds, including kittiwakes and fulmars. The cliffs often reach a height of 70 metres, giving views of outcrops of hexagonal columns of rose-coloured basalt, similar to those of the nearby Giant's Causeway. An altogether memorable trip and a memorable evening's entertainment.

Our next meeting: 7.30 pm on Thursday 6th January at The Lyttelton Rooms, Church Street, Malvern. *Eden Tanner: A Quest for Dragonflies*. £2.50, all welcome.



Boarding the boat to the island



Seabirds from the boat



Northern Marsh Orchid

