

## Worcestershire Wildlife Trust – Malvern Group

“Local bird ringers track cuckoos across the world”.

Bird ringing has always played an important part in understanding and conserving wild birds. A tiny metal ring weighing less than 0.05 grams with a plea to return to the Natural History Museum if found, is still used to track a wild bird's movements. Now, however, the traditional methods stand alongside modern hi-tech with birds carrying solar powered satellite transmitters with them as they migrate across the world. Stuart Brown, a local bird ringer for the British Trust for Ornithology, told this month's meeting of the Malvern Group of the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust about his part in following the migration of cuckoos. Until recently, very little was known of where they went on their travels, but now they have been tracked by satellite as they leave Britain to cross Europe, stopping to “fatten-up” in the Po Valley in Central Italy before crossing North Africa. Alas, many don't make it across The Sahara, but those that do end up on the fringes of the West African rain forest – only to make the same journey in return when April calls them back to Britain. Local bird ringers erect “mist” nets on reserves for an hour or so at dawn, recording and ringing the birds they find before quickly releasing them back into the wild. The data is shared internationally to understand the pattern of bird movements around the world. Stuart told us that local ringers are experimenting with recordings of bird song to attract their quarry. Redwings, we were told, are particularly attracted by a call known as the “Lithuanian Love Song”. We were assured that the call was very effective, but were unable to learn anything of its origins!

More information about the BTO Cuckoo Tracking Project can be found at:

<http://www.bto.org/cuckoos>



Tagging a cuckoo



Ringling a fieldfare