



# Worcestershire Wildlife Trust



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## Devil's advocates

Tuesday 8th January 2019



### Contractors and volunteers have been working hard to restore one of Worcestershire's rarest habitats.

The work is taking place at Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's [The Devil's Spittleful nature reserve](#) between Stourport, Kidderminster and Bewdley. The Devil's Spittleful forms part of the largest area of heathland in the county, a habitat that has declined by about 98% in the last 200 years.

Andy Harris, Conservation Officer responsible for the reserve explained "The Devil's Spittleful is a fabulous refuge for wildlife as well as being a beautiful place for people to walk through.

"The nature of this heathland, however, is that it will revert to scrubby woodland and we risk losing the open areas that are so important for wildlife like lizards and many species of bees. We aim to maintain a mix of habitats – open patches of heather, scrubby areas of gorse and broom as well as smaller areas of trees – but this takes time and resources.

"Each year our volunteers do a great job of managing small areas but we also employ contractors each year to do some of the bigger work.

"Rather than concentrating in just one area, however, the work is taking place in smaller patches across the site. This means that it may not be quite so obvious to visitors but will make a real difference for wildlife across the whole site.

pairs of hands.”



## Open landscape

The Devil's Spittleful was an open landscape for hundreds of years but as traditional use and management of the area stopped, tree saplings took root and started to grow. Not only do trees shade out growth of other plants but leaf litter also restricts heather regrowth as well as that of more delicate plants like harebell and sheep's bit.

Heathland wildlife such as common lizards and stonechats are declining in numbers so the work should help to restore their populations.

Andy added "This is such a beautiful place to be – in the summer it's alive with butterflies, bees and other insects that support a wealth of birds, bats and other wildlife.

"It would be fantastic if, eventually, we could attract birds such as nightjar and woodlark back to the reserve to breed."

The Devil's Spittleful is so-called because folklore states that the Devil struck his spade into the ground there. The nature reserve sits next to Wyre Forest District Council's Rifle Range and Burlish Top nature reserves.

Anyone wishing to make a difference for wildlife at this peaceful site can join the [volunteer group](#) that meets once a month to undertake general maintenance tasks. No previous experience or skills are necessary and the group meets on the third Saturday of the month between 9am and 1pm.



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