



Worcestershire Wildlife Trust



A Wilder Future

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The last hedgehog in Worcestershire?

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Protect local wildlife



Habitats explorer

Traditional Orchard



Round, reddening apples, deep purple plums, sweet cherries, crunchy walnuts and juicy pears are just some of the fruits and nuts produced in our traditional orchards. Added to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan as recently as 2007, traditional orchards are being recognised as vital refuges for wildlife, as well as significant to the local character of our landscapes. They often contain a mosaic of habitats, including scrub, hedgerows and grasslands, as well as fruit trees of varying ages and an abundance of dead and decaying wood, all of which can support a wide range of plants and animals.

Traditional orchards are found in all countries of the UK, although England has the bulk of them. It's estimated that there are 25,350 hectares of traditional orchards in the UK, putting this habitat at the rarer end of the scale.

Managing with tradition in mind

Traditional orchards are defined as those with more than five trees less than 20 metres apart. They are managed in a

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with nectar-rich flowers, while many species of invertebrates, from common woodlice to rare noble chafer beetles, depend on the dead wood left standing or fallen in orchards.

A veritable feast for wildlife

Autumn is a great time to visit an orchard. In preparation for the cold months ahead, mammals, bats and birds feast on fallen fruit and the insects inevitably attracted to it. Fungi like waxcaps, puffballs, field mushrooms and bracket fungus emerge on the orchard floor or on tree trunks. A seasonal favourite, mistletoe, is often found on apple trees – spread by mistle thrushes and other birds that feast on its berries.

Discover the rainbow colours of lichens

Orchards are also great places to seek out unusual lichens and mosses. Stand back from a tree and marvel at the different hues on the bark; from the bright yellow-orange golden shield lichen to the apple-green common green shield, there's a rainbow of lichens just waiting to be discovered.

How we're helping

Like many of our traditionally managed habitats, our orchards are becoming relicts within a sea of more intensively managed landscapes. Traditional orchards are becoming increasingly rare as we rely more heavily on imports to provide cheap fruit throughout the year. Those that are left are suffering from development, intensification, poor management and neglect, leaving the traditional orchard, an intrinsic feature of our countryside, at risk.

The Wildlife Trusts are working on a local level to ensure that traditional management techniques are not lost to the mists of time. Careful grazing with traditional breeds, hay-cutting at the right time and scrub clearance are just some of the ways our fragile orchard habitats are kept in good condition. We are also working closely with farmers and landowners to promote wildlife-friendly practices in these areas.

You can help too: volunteer for your local Wildlife Trust and you could be involved in everything from stockwatching to surveying for insects, and you'll certainly get to enjoy the fruits of your labour!

Typical orchard wildlife

Hedgehog, badger, fox, field vole, pipistrelle bat, greater horseshoe bat, dormouse, robin, wren, blue tit, bullfinch, chaffinch, great spotted woodpecker, green woodpecker, lesser spotted woodpecker, fieldfare, redwing, mistle thrush, noble chafer beetle, orange tip butterfly, red admiral butterfly, bumblebee, ladybird, mistletoe marble moth, ivy, holly, mistletoe, yellow rattle, oxeye daisy, cowslip, golden shield lichen, common greenshield lichen

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