



Wildlife Trust for  
**Beds, Cambs  
& Northants**



Learn more  
about the wildlife  
and habitats of  
Beds, Cambs &  
Northants

# Wildlife Training Workshops 2024

## Wildlife Training Workshops programme 2024


Our Wildlife Training Workshops offer a friendly atmosphere where you can expand your knowledge of the special wildlife right on your doorstep. Learn from knowledgeable and enthusiastic local naturalists and develop your skills with a group of like-minded people.

We offer a mixture of online, some with optional outdoor sessions, and face-to-face workshops across Beds, Cambs and Northants. This year we are pleased to offer new workshops designed for teenagers, and an introduction to Great Fen geology, thanks to funding via our Peatland Progress project from NLHF.

Find all the information on our website: [wildlifebcn.org/workshops](http://wildlifebcn.org/workshops)

If you have any queries, contact Juliette Butler, Training Workshops Officer on 07793 606026 or email [trainingworkshops@wildlifebcn.org](mailto:trainingworkshops@wildlifebcn.org)

### KEY

- B** Bedfordshire
- C** Cambridgeshire
- N** Northamptonshire
-  Online
- ★ For teens, aged 13+

### Basic Ecology Skills

Botany

Habitat Management

Invertebrates

Lower Plants

Practical Skills

Vertebrates

### Introduction to Raptor Identification with Henry Stanier



Raptors are a fascinating group of birds and the Great Fen is fast becoming a great place to see them, especially in winter. This is a beginner's guide to learn more about where and when to see them, and how to identify them, perched and in flight. There is also an optional visit to the Great Fen reserve where one-to-one guidance on identification will be given.

**Wed 10 Jan, 7–9pm, online**

**Sat 13 Jan, 1.30–4.30pm, Great Fen**



Vaughn Williams

### Introduction to Winter Tree Identification with Matt Hamilton



Learn to identify common, native broadleaved deciduous and, if found, exotic trees in winter. Types of trees and their associations helps with a better understanding of your local nature reserves.

**Sat 20 Jan, 10am–4pm, Cambourne**

### Spoon Carving with Mark Ricketts



Learn to carve spoons from green (unseasoned) wood using traditional axe and knife techniques. No previous experience is necessary, suitable for complete beginners.

**Sat 3 OR Sun 4 Feb, 10am–5pm, Cambourne**



## Slugs and Snails with Brian Eversham



Slugs and snails are amongst the most recognisable and important decomposer organisms. As most species are very poor dispersers, they are also excellent indicators of ancient woodland, grassland and wetland habitats. This workshop will help participants with the identification of slugs and snails in the field.

**Wed 7 Feb, 7pm–8.30pm, online**

## Heathland Lichens with Brian Eversham and Lewis Saunders

**B**

Cup-lichens, 'reindeer-moss', dog-lichen and devil's-matchsticks – some of the largest and most beautiful lichens grow on heathlands, and indeed are an important part of the vegetation. Spend a day concentrating on lichens which grow on soil, especially the genus *Cladonia* of which there are not too many species in our area. By the end of the day participants should be able to name most of them: a useful skill for natural heaths as well as gravel pits, disused railways and other brownfield sites.

**Sun 25 Feb, 10am–4pm, Cooper's Hill**

## Mosses and Liverworts with Rachel Carter

**N**

Mosses and liverworts are beautiful and deserve close examination. This course will help you to appreciate their fine detail, and to use your observations to identify different species. You will use hand lenses for field identification, and also spend time using microscopes. Beginners and improvers are welcome.

**Sat 23 Mar, 10am–4pm, Lings**

## Water Voles and Other Riverside Mammals with Iain Webb and Ruth Hawksley

**C**

Find out about riverside mammals including water voles, otters and Daubenton's bats. The day will start with an indoor session looking at ecology, field signs and the current local status of the various species, and will include a field trip to look for signs.

**Sat 30 Mar, 10am–4pm, Trumpington Meadows**

## Introduction to Dormice with Henry Stanier



This online workshop will give a good background introduction to people who wish to learn about dormouse monitoring. We will also cover the natural history of dormice and explore examples of monitoring projects, including the first re-introduction in the country at Brampton Wood.

**Wed 10 Apr, 7pm–9pm, online**

## Introduction to Burying Beetles with Ellie Bladon



Burying beetles are nature's undertakers, turning small dead animals

into edible nests for their offspring. This online workshop will focus on the *Nicrophorus* genus, covering their fascinating ecology and providing tips for identifying and sampling them.

**Wed 17 Apr, 7pm–8.30pm, online**

### Mammal Tracks and Signs with Peter Pilbeam

C

This workshop will highlight the sorts of mammal tracks and signs that you might come across when out in the countryside. 'Tracks' could include those of the larger mammals like badgers, foxes, otters and deer, but will hopefully include the smaller mammals like hedgehogs and water voles – all may depend on the weather. 'Signs' can be a very wide variety of things, including droppings, hair, fur, feeding signs (like holes in nuts and gnawed fir cones and tree bark) and 'homes' including badger setts and water vole burrows.

**Sat 20 Apr, 10am–4pm, Paxton Pits**

### Pond Dipping for Adults with Kevin Rowley

C

Dipping in pools with a net is a well-known activity for children. But it need not be an activity exclusively practised by children. This course will take the "simple" a step further, by introducing participants to techniques for pond assessment and providing a crash-course in identification of pond macro-invertebrates to species level.

**Sat 27 Apr, 10am–4pm, Cambourne**

New for 2024!

### Introduction to the Geology of the Great Fen with Dr Steve Boreham

C

The Fenland of eastern England forms a flat low-lying expanse of

land south of the Wash. The majority of this once wet and marshy region has now been drained for agriculture. The northern part of the Fenland basin is underlain by marine silts, but in southern Fenland there are thick accumulations of organic-rich Holocene deposits, often known as 'fen peat'. This Workshop aims to describe the stratigraphy and sediment architecture of Holocene deposits in the Great Fen area. There will also be a field trip to key locations.

**Sun 5 May, 10am – 4pm, Great Fen**

### Introduction to Bird Identification and Birdsong with Paul Gosling

B

This workshop will include visual and aural identification, plus an exploration of the niches each species occupies at the reserve, focusing on feeding, nesting and behaviour. The day will start with an indoor presentation followed by a field trip around the reserve.

**Sat 11 May 10am–4pm, Strawberry Hill**



New for 2024!

### Snail-killing Flies with John Showers

N

The snail-killing flies (family *Sciomyzidae*) are so-called as most



species in their larval stage are predators or parasites of snails or slugs, although a few parasitise millipedes. There are 69 species on the British checklist. Most are associated with wetlands but some are found in woodland or grasslands. Many have attractively marked wings and some can be confused with the picture-winged flies.

This workshop will cover the identification of adults using pinned specimens which can be examined under a microscope. A key to the species will be provided. No prior knowledge of fly identification will be assumed. Most species are fairly straightforward to identify but some require examination of male genitalia to confirm identification.

**Sat 11 May, 10am–4pm, Old Sulehay**

### Introduction to Bats with Henry Stanier PLUS optional bat walk



Explore the natural history of bats; what they are and where they are, their place in the world and how they live in it. Includes the option of an evening guided walk in Cambs to detect and observe local species and gain experience in using ultrasound detectors to “listen” to bat echolocation.

**Wed 15 May, 7pm–9pm, online**

**Sat 18 May, 9.30pm walk, St Ives**

### Charcoal Making with Greg Belcher



Discover the process of producing lumpwood charcoal. The workshop will examine the history of charcoal use

and production; learn how this process affected the landscape and preserved the existence of our ancient woodland blocks; and get hands on with the work of preparing, loading, firing and sealing a 1.8m charcoal ring kiln, learning how to make your own charcoal in an oil barrel. We will also discuss the opening of the kiln, bagging and marketing of the lumpwood charcoal to the local community.

**Sun 19 May, 10am–4pm, Grafham Water**

*New for 2024!*

### Introduction to Ecology with Brian Eversham



Calling all ecologists of the future! Do you have a passion for wildlife but not sure where to start? Come and join WTBCN Chief Executive, Brian Eversham for an introductory workshop. Set in the heart of the Great Fen you will learn how to identify different habitats, their importance and how to monitor in the context of our changing world.

**Wed 29 May, 10am–4pm, Ramsey**

**Heights** (additional date on back page)

*New for 2024!*

### Woodland plants and plant communities with Lewis Saunders



Old Sulehay supports one of the last remnants of the ancient Rockingham Forest noted for its amazing displays of woodland wildflowers. The varied soil types underlying the area have given rise to a diverse flora, and because the woodland has never been replanted, it is also a great place to see and understand semi-natural woodland plant communities or vegetation. During the workshop you

will learn the identification features of a wide range of characteristic woodland plant species, with a focus on those which indicate ancient woodland. We will also explore the natural variation in the plant communities found in British woodlands.

**Sun 2 Jun, 10am–4pm, Old Sulehay**

### Butterfly Identification and Ecology with Andrew Bladon and Matt Hayes

C

Around 60 species of butterfly live in the UK and a diverse selection of them can be seen on our reserves. A complex life cycle means that many butterflies are extremely sensitive to environmental change and these species can act as important bio-indicators. Therefore, studying



butterflies can help us monitor natural ecosystems and protect a wide array of other animals and plants.

This workshop will provide background information on the biology and ecology of butterflies, and will also include a field trip where you will learn to identify some of the species yourself.

**Sat 8 Jun, 10am–4pm, Trumpington Meadows**

### Grasses I: A Beginner's Introduction with Brian Eversham

N

Grasses are among the most important flowering plants, ubiquitous in almost all habitats. Their structure, co-evolved with grazing animals, means they dominate pastureland and meadows. This workshop will

explain their structure, including their beautiful if subtle flowers, and help you identify common grasses. A guide to recognising the most distinctive species and keys to flowering and vegetative features will be used.

**Sun 9 Jun, 10am – 4pm, Old Sulehay**

New for 2024!

### Introduction to Macro Photography with Dave Jackson

N

This workshop will include a short presentation before a field trip on the reserve to look for suitable subjects to photograph. Weather permitting there may also be the opportunity to photograph moths caught overnight in the moth trap. Suitable for beginners and those who have some previous experience. Basic knowledge of your camera settings is required.

**Sun 9 Jun, 10am–4pm, Pitsford Water**

### Introduction to Wildflower Identification with Matt Jackson

B

Do you want to know how to tell the difference between a speedwell and a sandwort? Or to know what the parts are that make up a flower? Learn to use identification keys and about the characteristics of plants that are used to tell them apart.

**Sat 15 Jun, 10am–4pm, Strawberry Hill**

New for 2024!

### Introduction to British Moth Species with Andy and Melissa Banthorpe

C

This workshop will mainly be covering the macro moths which are likely to be found in our area, but will also cover some of the easier to identify micro-moths. Advice will be given on

Identification books and other useful resources. The practical element will use books to identify pre-caught live moths to species.

**Sat 15 June, 10am–4pm, Cambourne**

### Grasses II: Practicing Grass Identification with Brian Eversham

N

For people who have already had a go at identifying grasses, perhaps having attended Grasses I, this day will use the same identification guides and give participants more time to practise using keys, and learning to recognise grasses outside. A little more attention will be given to vegetative, non-flowering features: the beginning of identifying grasses at any time of year.

**Sun 16 Jun, 10am–4pm, Old Sulehay**



Nathalie Hueber

### Meadow Ecology and Conservation with Matt Johnson

N

Learn about the ecology and conservation of floodplain meadows with a look at the ecology, management and conservation of floodplain meadows as well as botanical and hydrological

monitoring techniques. Then visit a SSSI meadow to learn about survey techniques, botanical ID skills and comparisons of differing management and restoration techniques.

**Sat 22 Jun, 10am–4pm, Bugbrooke Meadow**

### Introduction to Dragonflies with Henry Stanier

C

Dragonflies (including damselflies) are a fascinating group of insects. Join this beginner's guide to learn more about their natural history and ecology, where and when to see them, and how to identify them (perched and in flight), covering all the species currently found in Beds, Cambs and Northants, plus others which may be on the way here!

This workshop also includes a visit to the Great Fen to give you one-to-one guidance.

**Sat 22 Jun, 10am–4pm, Great Fen**

### Introduction to Butterflies in Northamptonshire with David James

N

Find out more about the butterfly species you are likely to see in Northants. The day will include information about the identification and life cycles of our butterflies along with tips to help when conducting butterfly surveys. The field trip will put some of the identification skills into practice. No experience or equipment is necessary, although a pair of close focusing binoculars would be an advantage during the field trip.

**Sat 14 July, 10am–4pm, Old Sulehay**

Find out more and book online [wildlifebcn.org/workshops](http://wildlifebcn.org/workshops)



New for 2024!

## Introduction to Ecology with Brian Eversham

C



Calling all ecologists of the future!  
See description on page 5.

**Wed 21 Aug, 10am–4pm, Ramsey Heights**

## BES1: Species and Habitats (Including Habitat Classification) with Brian Eversham

C

An introduction to the basic ecology of species and their populations, with a description and classification of the main habitat types in our three counties.

**Sun 8 Sep, 10am–4pm, Cambourne**

## BES2: Habitat Management and Monitoring with Brian Eversham

C

The Trust puts much effort into grazing, mowing, coppicing and other activities – why? How do we decide what to do? What are the underlying principles? Learn about the underlying ecological processes in managing habitat, the basic features of the major habitat types and the role of monitoring in conservation.

**Sun 22 Sept, 10am–4pm, Cambourne**

New for 2024!

## The Ecology of Climate Change with Brian Eversham

N

The climate crisis affects all our wildlife, and changes how we manage nature reserves. This workshop will explore the underlying ecology; impacts on habitats; how plants are responding; changes in geographic range and biology of invertebrates and vertebrates; invasive species and diseases. The field trip will look for climate change impacts, and 'new' species which have arrived in our area recently.

**Sun 6 Oct, 10am–4pm, Old Sulehay**

## Small Mammals – Identification and Surveying with Peter Pilbeam

C

Get involved with the capture and identification of small mammals in this workshop along with a range of related aspects of work. The evening session will be used to set a variety of small mammal traps and the early start is to see what's been caught overnight – the welfare of any trapped animal is of paramount importance. There will be a session on British mammals in general, methods of study (including owl pellet analysis) and on small mammal surveying.

**Sat 12 and Sun 13 Oct, 5-7.30pm and 8am-1pm, Cambourne**

## Coppicing with Ian Wilson

N

A practical introduction to coppicing. The day will be spent in the wood looking at coppicing, layering and ride-widening and how these activities can benefit the flora and fauna of the wood.

**Sun 10 Nov, 10am–4pm, Short Wood**