



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



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

Wildlife Training Workshops 2026

Wildlife Training Workshops programme 2026

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 workshops designed for teenagers again, thanks to funding via our Peatland Progress project from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Find all the information on our website: wildlifebcn.org/workshops

If you have any queries, contact Juliette Butler, Training Workshops Officer on 07793 606026 or email trainingworkshops@wildlifebcn.org

KEY

- B** Bedfordshire
- C** Cambridgeshire
- N** Northamptonshire
-  Online
- ★ NEW for 2026

Basic Ecology Skills

Botany

Habitat Management

Invertebrates

Lower Plants

Practical Skills

Vertebrates

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 14 Jan, 7–9pm, online

Sat 17 Jan, 1.30–4.30pm, Great Fen

Introduction to Winter Tree Identification with Matt Hamilton



Learn to identify common, native broadleaved deciduous and, if found,

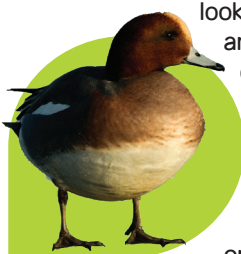
exotic trees in winter. Types of trees and their associations helps with a better understanding of your local nature reserves.

Sat 24 Jan, 10am–4pm, Cambourne

Waterfowl – Identification of Ducks, Geese and Swans with Nathan Long



A practical workshop designed for beginners and developing birders. We will



look at the key features and behaviours in order to identify ducks, geese, and swans in the field. With practical tips, insights, and plenty of opportunities to

Danny Green/2020Vision

practice your ID skills, you'll leave more confident in spotting and identifying these wetland specialists.

Sat 31 Jan, 10am–4pm, Grafham Water

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 7 OR Sun 8 Feb, 10am–5pm, Cambourne. £90 (£85 for members)



Microscopes: choosing and using for natural history with Brian Eversham



Many aspects of natural history benefit from using a microscope: low-power stereo microscopes for insects, flowers or mosses; high-power compound microscopes for fungal spores, lichen fruits and the world of freshwater microscopical life. But many naturalists seem daunted by them. This workshop will briefly explore the history of microscopes and the different kinds, look at simple ways to prepare specimens, and give participants hands-on experience with a range of instruments. Participants are welcome to bring their own microscopes to get help in setting up and using them.

Sun 22 Feb, 10am–4pm, Cambourne

Mosses and Liverworts with Rachel Carter



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.

Sat 7 Mar, 10am–4pm, Lings

Introduction to Water Beetles with Kevin Rowley and Henry Stanier



Water Beetles are a great indicator species and the Great Fen has a diverse variety. This workshop will introduce you to the group, how to sample them using nets and traps and how to identify them. Field trips in Woodwalton Fen and the Great Fen will be included to set/collect traps and use net sampling.

Sat 28 AND Sun 29 Mar, 10am–4pm both days, Ramsey Heights £95 (£90 for members)

Mammal Tracks and Signs with Peter Pilbeam



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, but will hopefully include the smaller mammals like hedgehogs and water voles – all may depend on the weather. 'Signs' can include droppings, hair, fur, feeding signs and 'homes' – badger setts and water vole burrows.

Sat 11 Apr, 10am–4pm, Hayley Wood

Identifying Water Bugs with Kevin Rowley



This workshop is for people who are interested in identifying aquatic invertebrates using detailed keys. Water bugs are a good starting point,

Find out more and book online wildlifebcn.org/workshops

as there are a smaller number of species, some of which can be easily identified, either by using keys or a microscope. It also includes a field trip to collect specimens for identification.

Sat 18 Apr, 10am–4pm, Pitsford Water



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, with the northern part of the basin underlain by marine silts, but in the southern fenland there are thick accumulations of organic-rich Holocene deposits ('fen peat'). This workshop aims to give a better understanding of the holocene deposits of the lower Nene fen-edge and why it is essential for the continuing development of the Great Fen. There will also be a field trip to key locations within the Great Fen area.

Sat 25 Apr, 10am–4pm, Great Fen



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 25 Apr, 10am–4pm, Trumpington Meadows

Introduction to Common Bird Identification and Birdsong with Juliette Butler **N**

This beginner's workshop will include identifying birds by looking at features, and listening to their song. By the end of the day participants should be able to recognise some of the birds they're likely to encounter in their local area. The day will include indoor presentations, and field trips around the reserve.

Sun 26 Apr, 10am–4pm, Lings

Introduction to Warbler Identification with Duncan Woodhead **B**

This workshop is aimed at helping participants to identify our warblers by voice and plumage. It will start with an indoor session where we will listen to warbler songs and look at key features of warblers, to be followed by a walk testing our skills in the field. Suitable for beginners and those who want to improve existing identification skills.

Sat 9 May, 8am–1.30pm, Strawberry Hill

Identifying and Recording Soldierflies and Allies with Martin Harvey **N**

An opportunity to explore this fascinating group of 11 families of flies, using keys, specimens and microscopes to practice identification. We'll also discuss identification from

Workshops for Teens



These workshops are designed specifically for young people aged 13+.

Introduction to Ecology with Brian Eversham **C**

Calling all ecologists of the future! Do you have a passion for wildlife but not sure where to start? Join WBCN 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.

Thu 28 May, 10am–4pm, Ramsey Heights

photos and suggest some targets for recording during the coming year. This workshop is suitable for beginners as well as more experienced recorders who want to get more familiar with the group. Specimens will be available on the day for use with the keys, and if you have specimens of your own to be checked please bring them. The most comprehensive guide to these flies is *British soldierflies and their allies* published by BENHS. We'll also make use of the new field guide for north-west Europe by Zeegers and Schulten.

Sat 16 May, 10am–4pm, Old Sulehay

Charcoal Making with Greg Belcher **C**

Discover the process of producing lumpwood charcoal. Examine the history of charcoal use and production. Learn how this process affected the landscape

Introduction to Invertebrates with Brian Eversham **C**

This day will explain why invertebrates matter, and how their ecology and behaviour affects the ways in which we survey for them. We will try out the range of techniques for finding and surveying invertebrates, including direct searching and transects, sampling methods such as beating and sweeping, and trapping techniques such as pitfalls and baited traps (with syrup for ants!). Having found lots of invertebrates, we will examine some indoors, and look at the sorts of things that help us to identify species.

Fri 21 Aug, 10am–4pm, Ramsey Heights

and preserved the existence of our ancient woodland blocks. Get hands on with the work of preparing, loading, firing and sealing a 1.8m charcoal ring kiln and learn how to make your own charcoal in an oil barrel. Discuss the opening of the kiln, bagging and marketing of the lumpwood charcoal to the community.

Sun 17 May, 10am–4pm, Grafham 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 23 May, 10am–4pm, Strawberry Hill

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★ Pond Snails – Their Ecology and Identification with Brian Eversham C

Pond dipping usually reveals a diversity of freshwater snails of all shapes and sizes. They are a fairly straightforward group to learn to recognise to species level, and about 30 of the 50 British species can be found in our area, including some conservation priorities. They can be useful in assessing water quality and conservation value of ponds and ditches.

Sun 31 May, 10am–4pm, Paxton Pits

★ Introduction to Bats with Gwen Hitchcock and Juliette Butler N

An introduction to the fascinating world of bats, dispelling some of the myths that surround them. This workshop will include an indoor session covering their natural history and survey techniques, followed by an evening walk to see and hear bats using ultrasonic detectors.

Sat 6 Jun, 5–10.30pm, Pitsford Water

Introduction to Grasses with Monica O'Donnell C

Grasses are among the most important flowering plants, ubiquitous in almost all habitats. Their structure, co-evolved with grazing animals, adapts them well to mowing as well as grazing. There are

a limited number of different species (around 20), but at first identifying them can seem daunting. Once you have a few in your mind, it is easier to add others. We will look at some of these everyday species in detail and examine the structures that are important to distinguish them. The afternoon will be spent in the local area looking at species in the field, how to build on the number of species you can recognise, getting familiar with the commonest species, in a gradual and gentle way.

Sat 13 Jun, 10am – 4pm, Cambourne

Wildlife Photography Workshop with Dave Jackson N

So you want to be a wildlife photographer, have the gear and some idea, but want to step up to the next level? Whether it's birds, insects or flora this workshop will give you an understanding of the exposure triangle, shutter speed, RAW vs JPEG and other aspects to enable you to get better results from your camera, and where you might be going wrong. We'll be looking at theory including camera settings and editing and field practice out on the reserve. Dave is a renowned local wildlife photographer and has won awards for his bird photography.

Sat 20 Jun, 10am–4pm, Pitsford Water

Meadow Ecology and Conservation with Matt Johnson N

Learn about the ecology and conservation of floodplain meadows. The indoor session will look at the ecology, management and conservation of floodplain meadows as well as botanical and hydrological monitoring techniques. The afternoon site visits will look at a SSSI meadow and will cover survey techniques, botanical ID skills and

comparisons of differing management and restoration techniques.

Sat 20 Jun, 10am–4pm, Bugbrooke Meadow

★ Introduction to Chalk Streams with Ruth Hawksley C

Learn what a chalk stream is, and about the wildlife associated with chalk streams, in the Cambs area. There will be discussion on why our chalk streams are not pristine, and ideas for monitoring. Examples will be given on river restoration and what the Catchment Partnership is currently doing, and aiming for, in the River Cam catchment area. The day will also include a visit to a local chalk stream.

Sun 21 Jun, 10am–4pm, Linton area

Introduction to Dragonflies with Steve Cham B

This workshop will focus on finding and identifying the range of dragonflies on the reserve in Felmersham. Participants will learn how to identify flying adults, and the exuviae (the cast larval skins) of emerged species will also be looked at.

Sun 28 Jun, 10am–4pm, Felmersham Gravel Pits

★ 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. What is happening to the climate? 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 record 'new' species which have arrived in our area recently.

Sun 5 Jul, 10am–4pm, Old Sulehay

An Introduction to Wildlife Gardening with David and Zuzana Price C ★

This workshop is a general introduction to wildlife gardening, including sources of information and advice. The day includes a tour of the garden at the Trust's offices at the Manor House, with discussions on how it was created, how it's maintained and future improvements. Other wildlife gardens in the area will also be visited. There will be practical sessions of seed collection and sowing, and sampling for invertebrates.

Sat 18 Jul, 10am–4pm, Cambourne

An Introduction to Butterflies in Northants with David James N

Find out more about the butterfly species you are likely to see in Northants. The day will start with a presentation that 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 skills into practice. No experience or equipment is necessary, although a pair of close focusing binoculars would be an advantage.

Sat 25 Jul, 10am–4pm, Old Sulehay



An Introduction to Ants with Brian Eversham

B

Ants are among the best-known and most fascinating of invertebrates. This introductory day will explain many of the intriguing facts of ant biology, and give insights into their often-astonishing behaviour. Participants will be shown methods for sampling and monitoring ants, explore their value in habitat evaluation, and learn to identify the 20 or so local species. Chalk grassland and quarries such as Totternhoe have a very rich assemblage of ant species, so are the ideal place to study them.

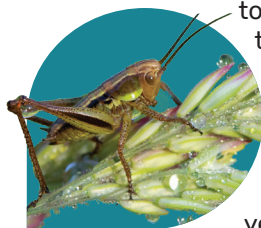
Sun 26 Jul, 10am–4pm, Totternhoe



Grasshoppers and Bush-crickets with Brian Eversham

N

The 20 or so local species are almost all easy to identify and, by the end of the course, people should be able



to recognise all of them by sight and many by sound. Ideal insects for monitoring they help to indicate several aspects of vegetation structure and management. They

are an important part of the fauna of calcareous grassland, heathland and open, early successional habitats.

Sun 23 Aug, 10am–4pm, Old Sulehay



An Introduction to Hedges with Monica O'Donnell

C

Hedges are amongst the most frequently encountered wildlife habitats in the farmed landscape. They have lots of fascinating stories to tell about history as well as the

plants and animals that call them home. Cambridgeshire hedges can be surprisingly diverse, and during this brief morning introduction, we will look at some of the shrubs to be found, how to recognise them and talk about some of the ways hedges can be managed.

Sat 5 Sep, 10am–1pm, Cambourne
£25 (£20 for members)

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

N

This workshop combines an introduction to the basic ecology of species and their populations, with a description and classification of the main habitats in our three counties. The second part of the day is a brief introduction to the main habitat types in the three counties, and how they can be classified.

Sun 6 Sep, 10am–4pm, Lings

BES2: Habitat Management and Monitoring with Brian Eversham

N

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? The day will concentrate on the underlying ecological processes in managing habitat, and the basic features of the major habitat types – heathland, grassland, wetland and woodland. The last part of the day will explain the role of monitoring in conservation, and which plants and animals to record in which habitats.

Sun 27 Sept, 10am–4pm, Lings